MAKOTO YUKIMURA
VINLAND
SAGA
BOOK·THREE

VINLAND
SAGA

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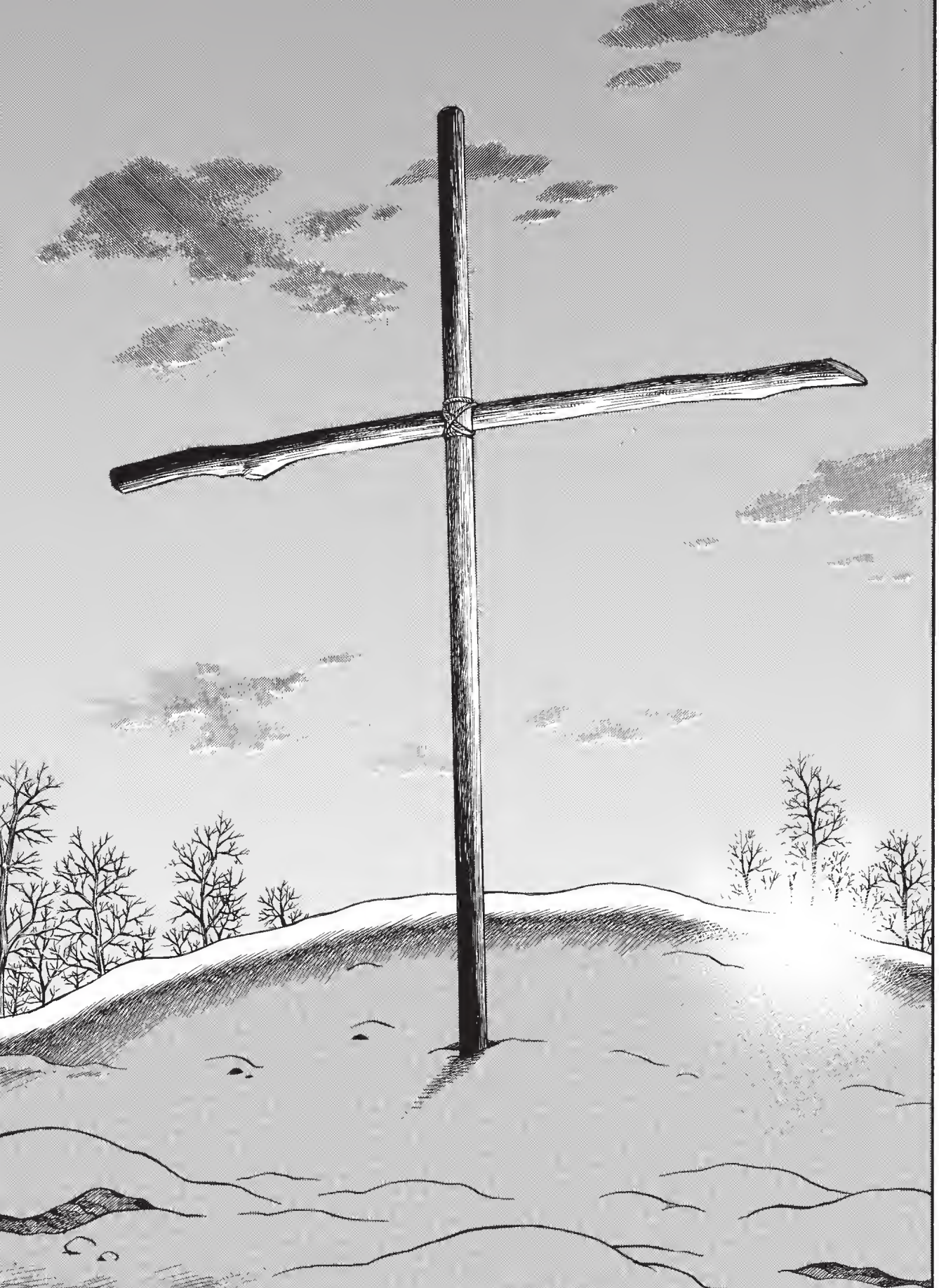
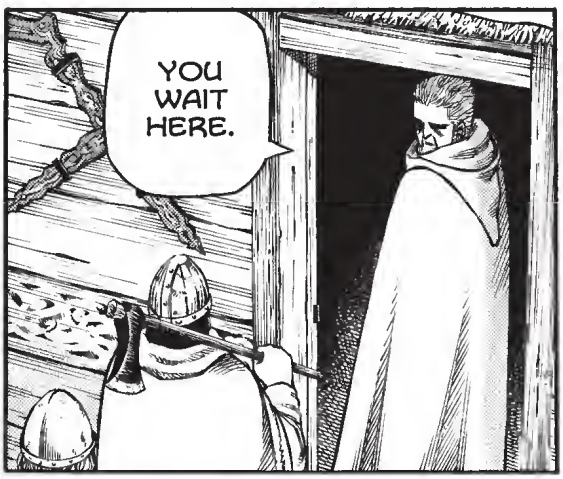
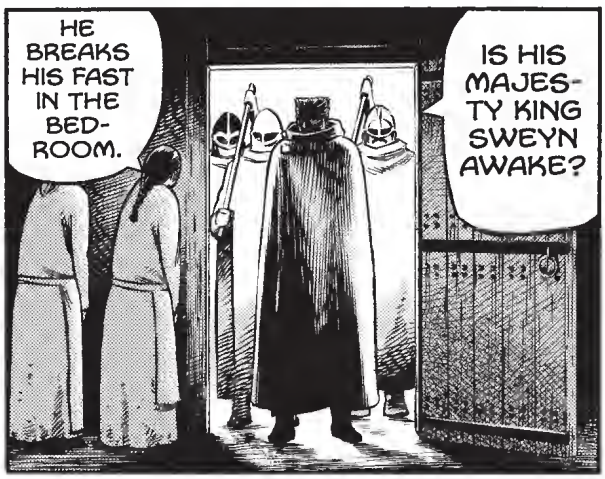
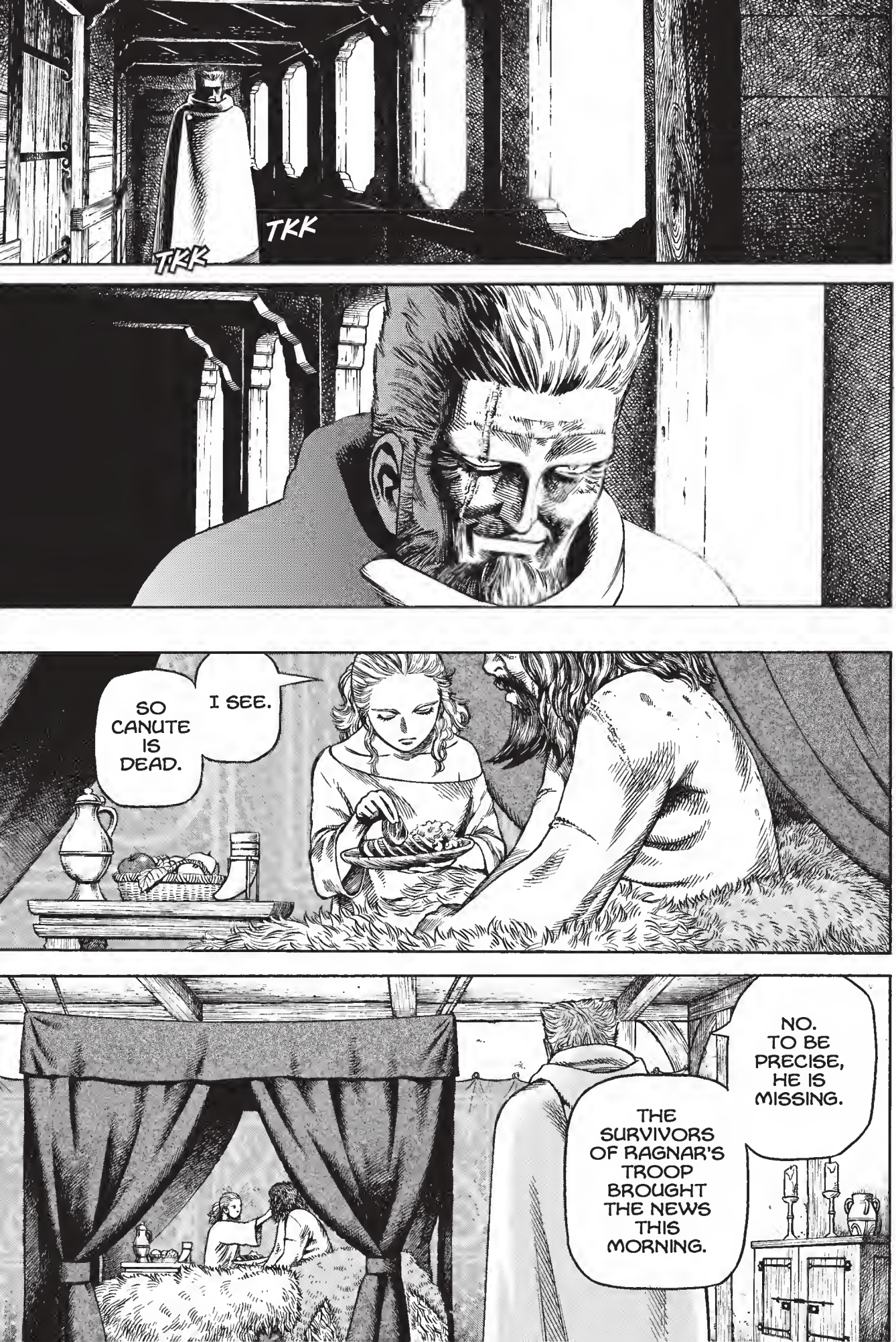


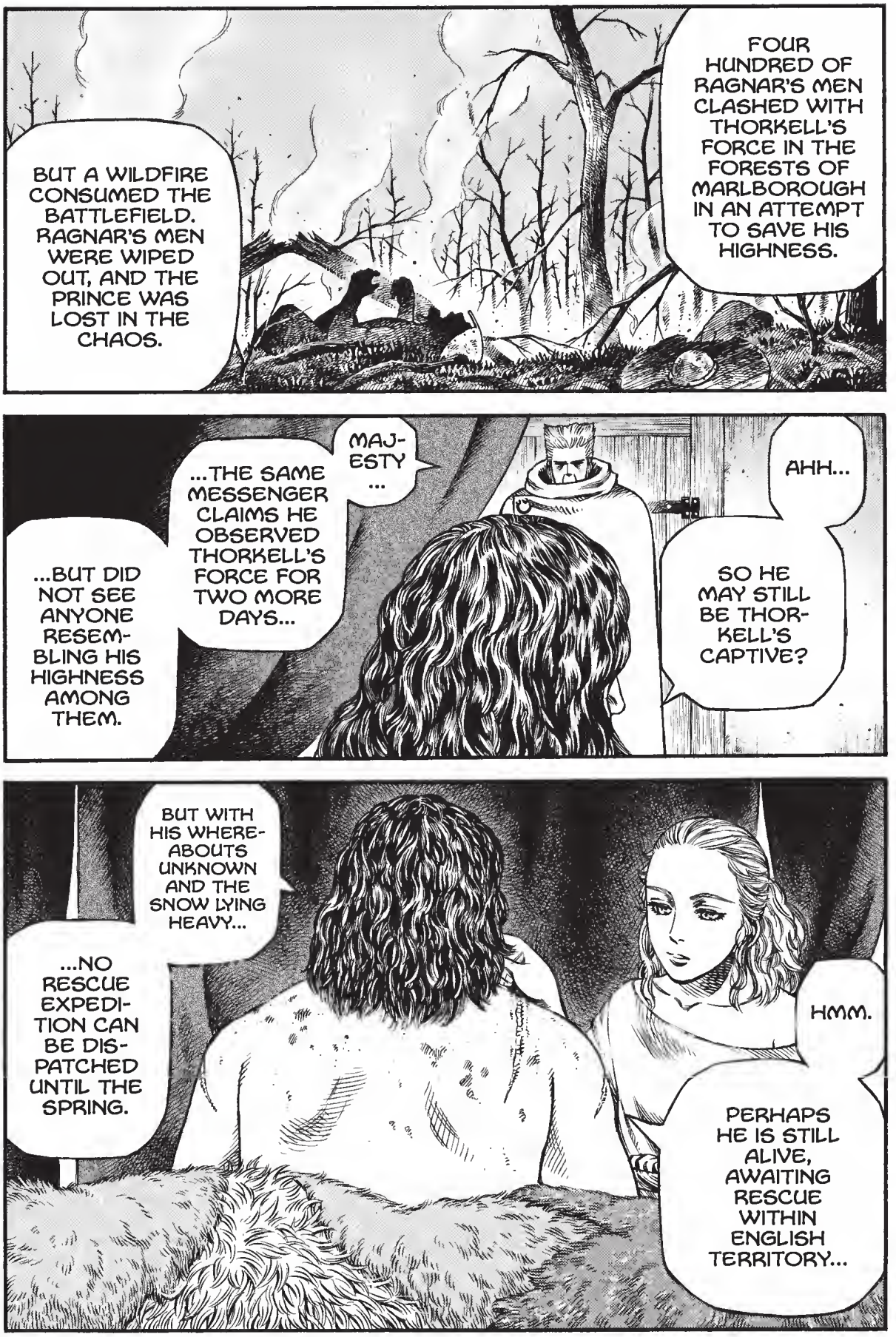
CHAPTER 29: FATHER AND SON

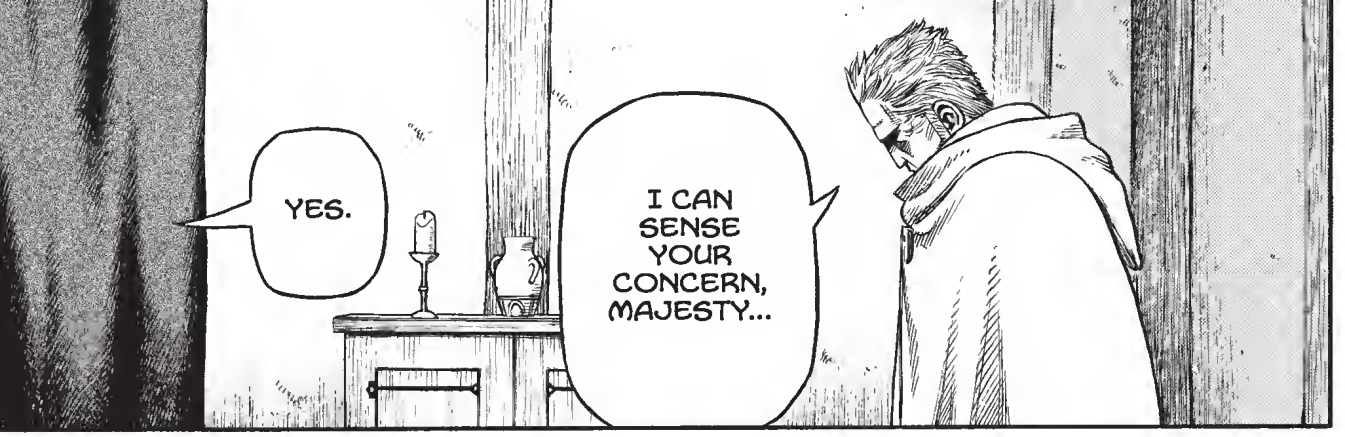
ZSHK
ZSHK
ZSHK
DANISH ARMY STATION
GAINSBOROUGH
THE DANELAW
(DANISH OCCUPIED TERRITORY)
EASTERN ENGLAND
DECEMBER 1013

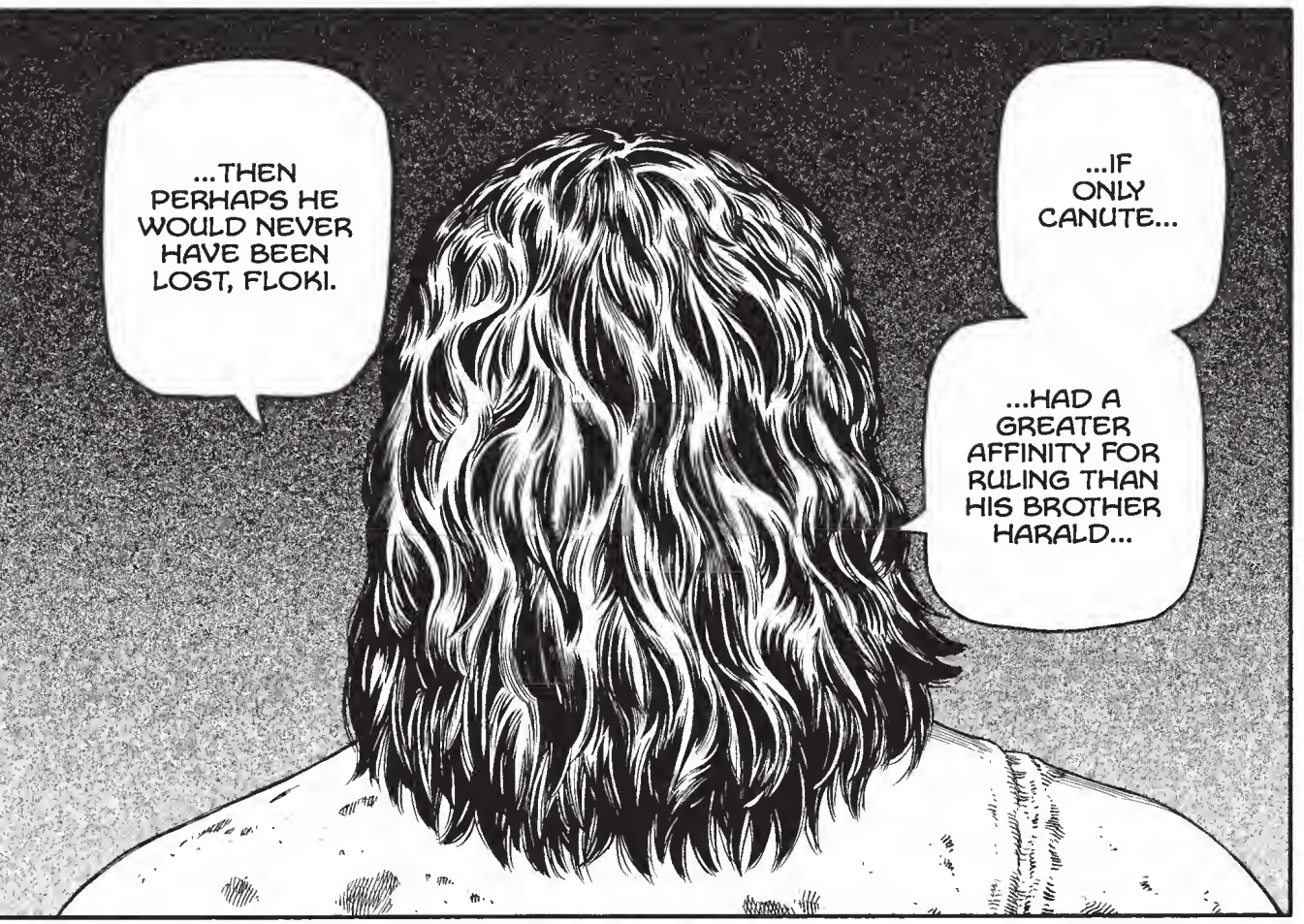

YOU WAIT HERE.

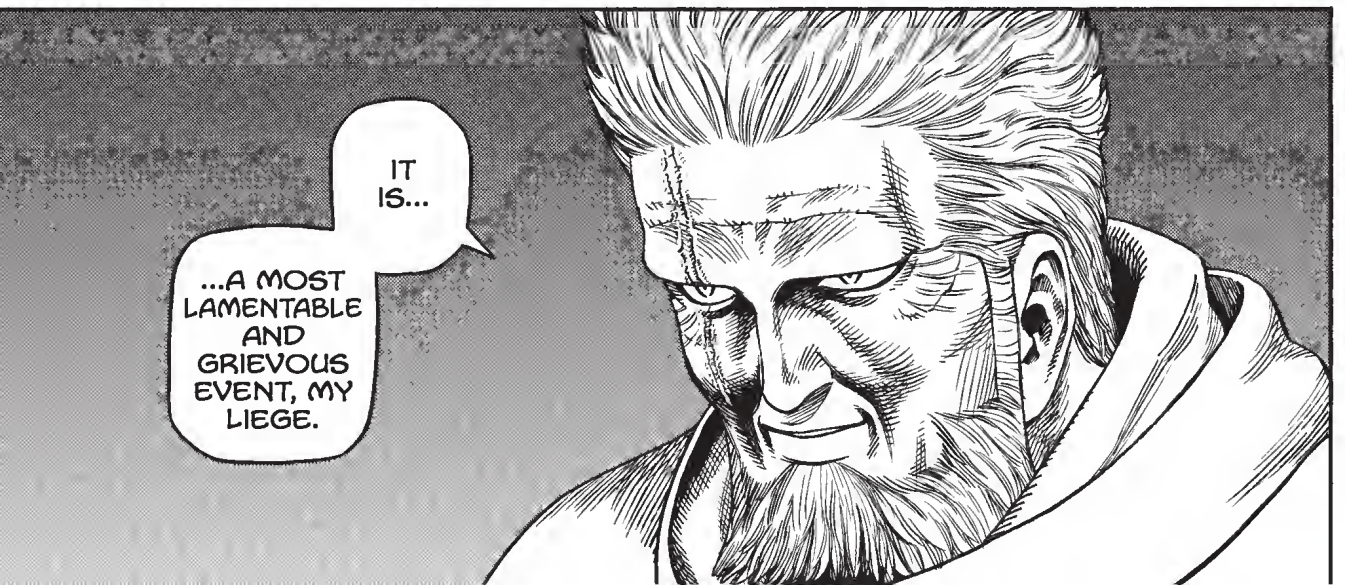

HE BREAKS HIS FAST IN THE BED-ROOM.
IS HIS MAJES-TY KING SWEYN AWAKE?

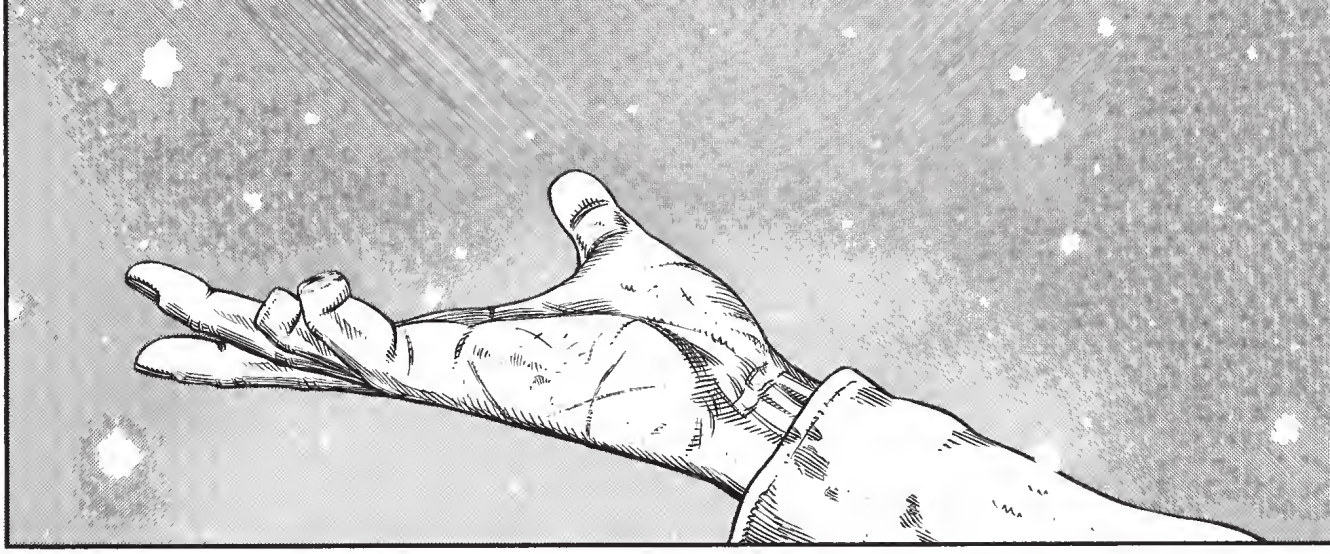

TKK
TKK
I SEE.
SO CANUTE IS DEAD.
NO. TO BE PRECISE, HE IS MISSING.
THE SURVIVORS OF RAGNAR'S TROOP BROUGHT THE NEWS THIS MORNING.

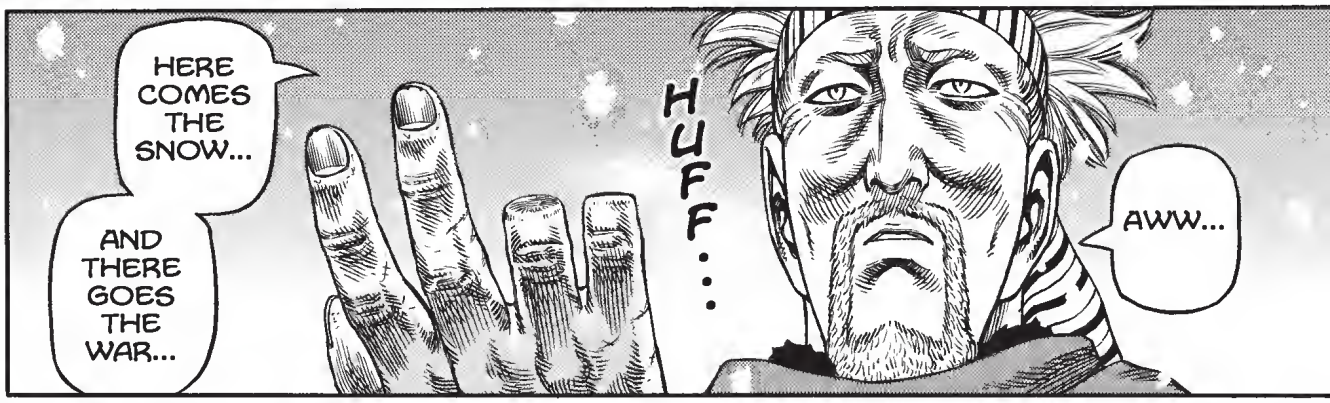

FOUR HUNDRED OF RAGNAR'S MEN CLASHED WITH THORKELL'S FORCE IN THE FORESTS OF MARLBOROUGH IN AN ATTEMPT TO SAVE HIS HIGHNESS.
BUT A WILDFIRE CONSUMED THE BATTLEFIELD. RAGNAR'S MEN WERE WIPED OUT, AND THE PRINCE WAS LOST IN THE CHAOS.
AHH...
SO HE MAY STILL BE THORKELL'S CAPTIVE?
MAJESTY...
...THE SAME MESSENGER CLAIMS HE OBSERVED THORKELL'S FORCE FOR TWO MORE DAYS...
...BUT DID NOT SEE ANYONE RESEMBLING HIS HIGHNESS AMONG THEM.
HMM.
PERHAPS HE IS STILL ALIVE, AWAITING RESCUE WITHIN ENGLISH TERRITORY...
BUT WITH HIS WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN AND THE SNOW LYING HEAVY...
...NO RESCUE EXPEDITION CAN BE DISPATCHED UNTIL THE SPRING.


I CAN SENSE YOUR CONCERN, MAJESTY...
YES.

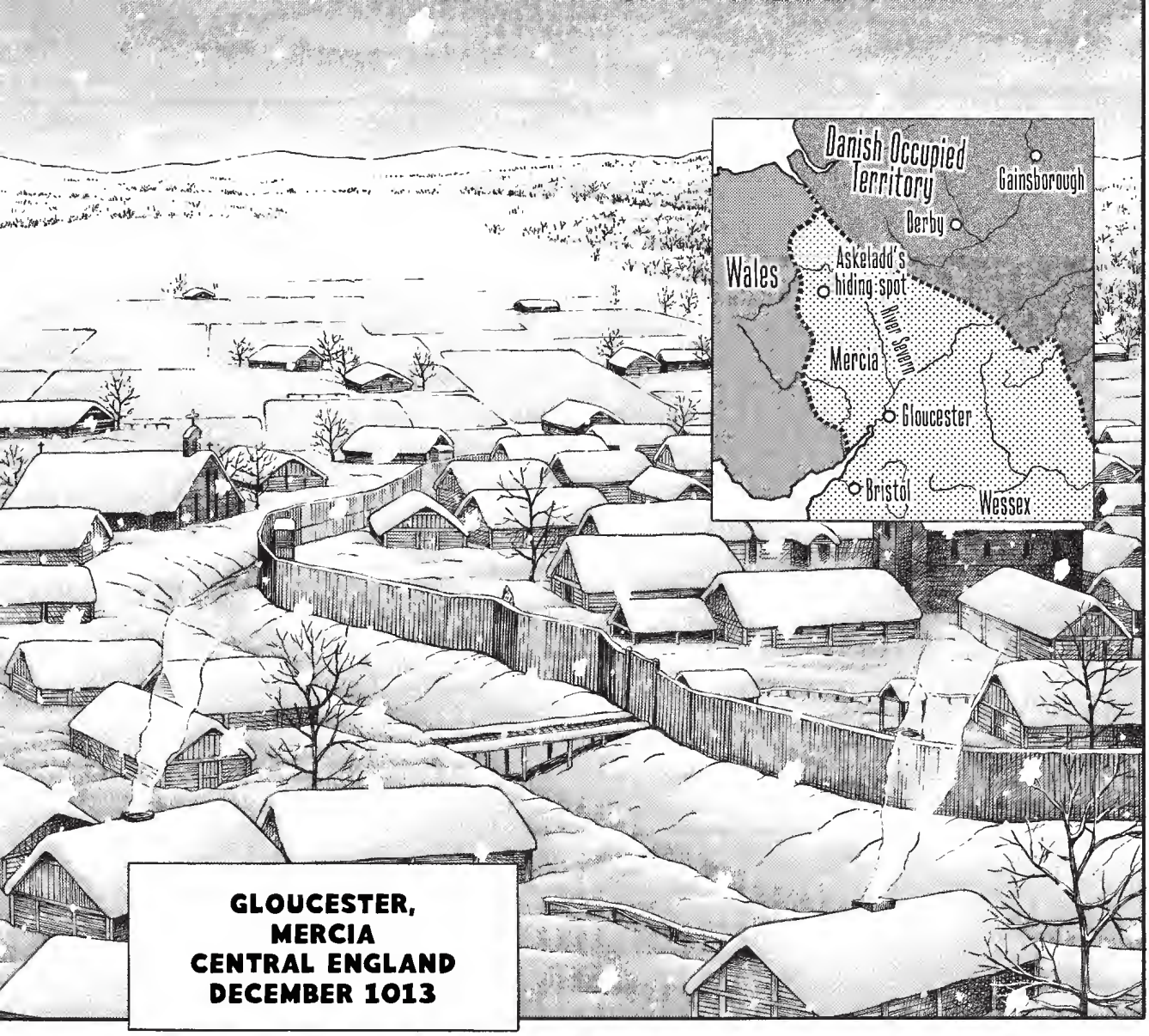

...IF ONLY CANUTE...
...HAD A GREATER AFFINITY FOR RULING THAN HIS BROTHER HARALD...
...THEN PERHAPS HE WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN LOST, FLOKI.


IT IS...
...A MOST LAMENTABLE AND GRIEVOUS EVENT, MY LIEGE.

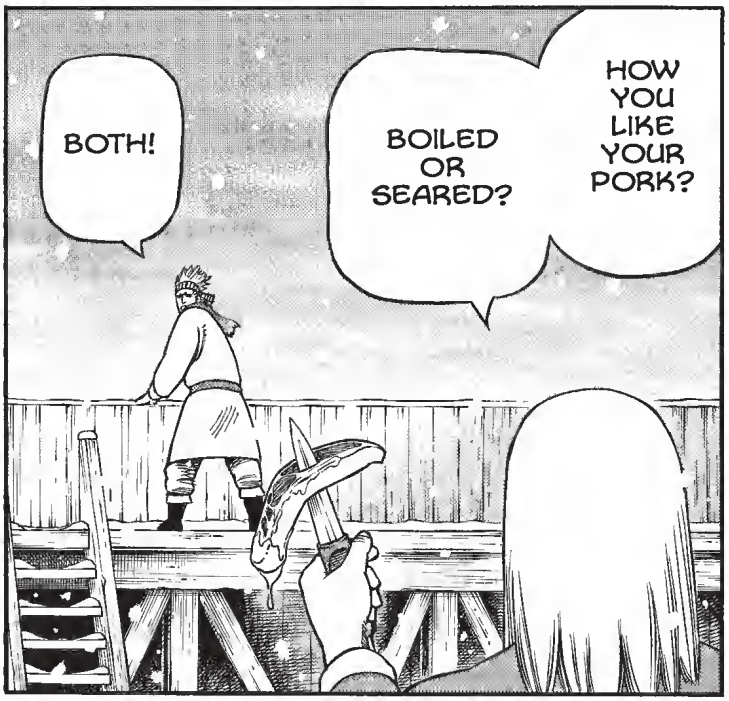



HERE COMES THE SNOW...
AND THERE GOES THE WAR...
HUFF...
AWW...

DEAR WINTER...
OH WINTER... MUST YOU EVEN FREEZE THE HEARTS OF WARRIORS?
IT'S SO SAD...

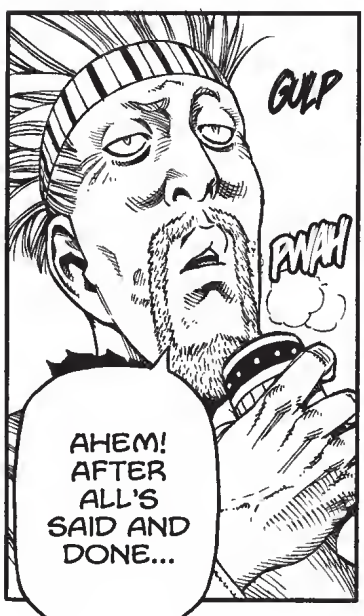


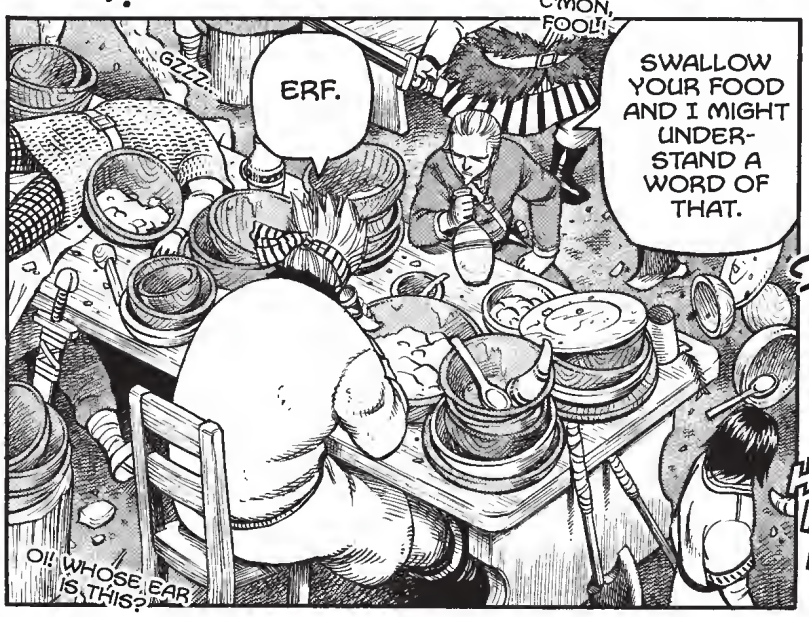
GLOUCESTER,
MERCIA
CENTRAL ENGLAND
DECEMBER 1013

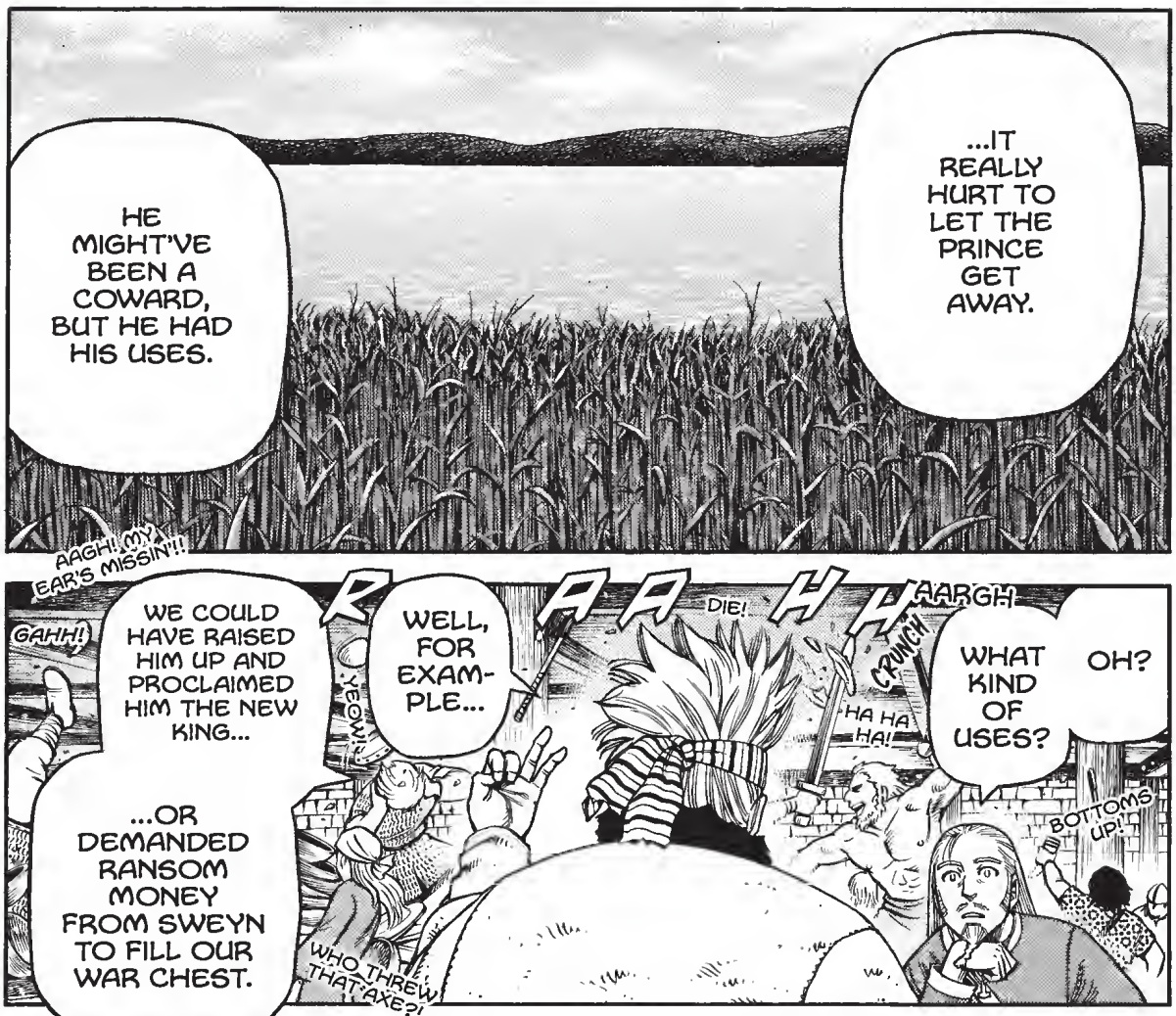


PARDON ME.
I WANNA SEE BLOOD!!
GO ON, FIGHT!
MORE ALE OVER HERE!
GA HA HA!
EVERYONE STRIP!
GYA HA HA HA
I'LL KILL YOU!
HE'S TINY!!
ZZZ...
FUCK YOU, SWINE!
CRASH
KEEP GOING!
GLUG
URGH!
HA HA HA
STOMP
MUNCH
GIMME YOUR BEST SHOT!!

GYA HA HA HA
NO, YOUR DRINK'S THAT ONE!
WHOA, WATCH OUT!!
AFFAH AWW EGGEN GUN...
...IW WIWWY HAFFA WAHH PIFF GUHAHH.
MRGL
CRAAASH
GWAAAH!
YOU'RE A DEAD MAN, I SWEAR IT!
YEOWWWW!


GULP
PWAH
AHEM! AFTER ALL'S SAID AND DONE...


C'MON, FOOL!
GZZZ...
ERF.
SWALLOW YOUR FOOD AND I MIGHT UNDER-STAND A WORD OF THAT.
CRASH
HEE HA HA
O! WHOSE EAR IS THIS?

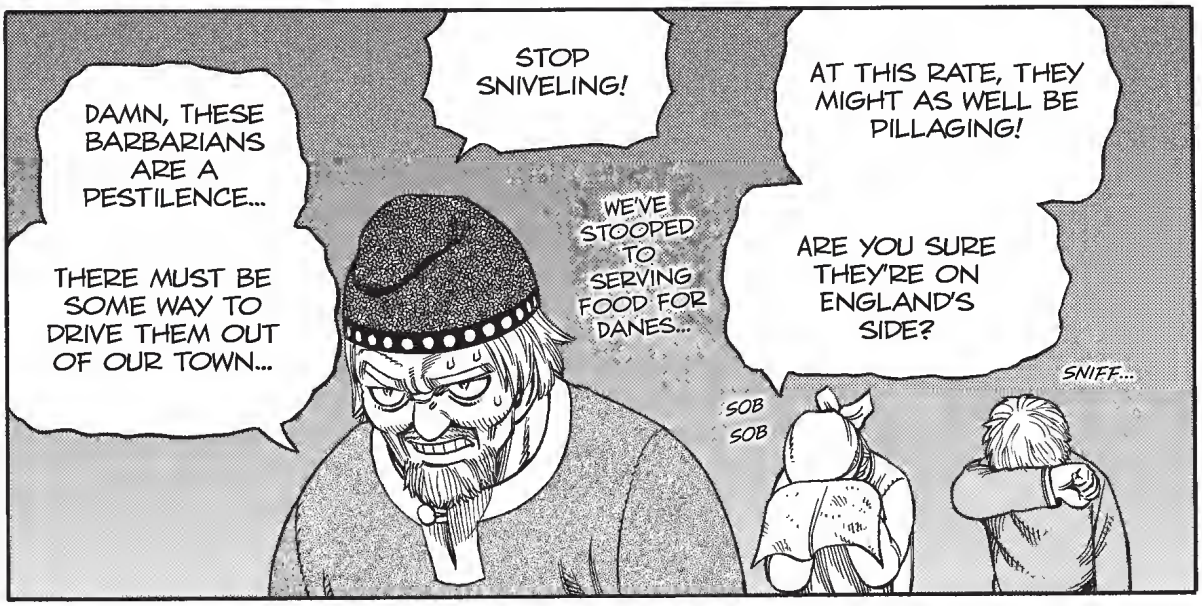

HE MIGHT'VE BEEN A COWARD, BUT HE HAD HIS USES.
...IT REALLY HURT TO LET THE PRINCE GET AWAY.
AAGH! MY EAR'S MISSIN'!!
GAHH!
WE COULD HAVE RAISED HIM UP AND PROCLAIMED HIM THE NEW KING...
...OR DEMANDED RANSOM MONEY FROM SWEYN TO FILL OUR WAR CHEST.
YEOW!
WELL, FOR EXAM-PLE...
WHO THREW THAT AXE?!
RAAAHH
DIE!
CRUNCH!
HA HA HA!
AARGH
WHAT KIND OF USES?
OH?
BOTTOMS UP!
RAHHH
WOW!
EEP!
YES?
HEY! YOU THERE, ENGLISH GIRL!
BEER! IS THERE ANY BEER? BRING A BARREL OF IT.
COWARD OR NOT, THE BOY'S ROYALTY.
HE'D HAVE BEEN USEFUL EVEN JUST TO RECRUIT SOLDIERS.
I SEE.
WITH YOU AS HIS BANNERMAN, WE MIGHT'VE RAISED OURSELVES A BIT OF AN ARMY, EH?

OH, NOT AGAIN!!
R
A
H
H
H
THE SOUP'S READY!
FZZ FZZ
POP SNAP
STOMP STOMP
WE NEED MORE BEER!
HURRY, HURRY!
EEEK!
TMP TMP TMP
MAKE IT QUICK!
CRKK
CHAK, CHAK, CHAK

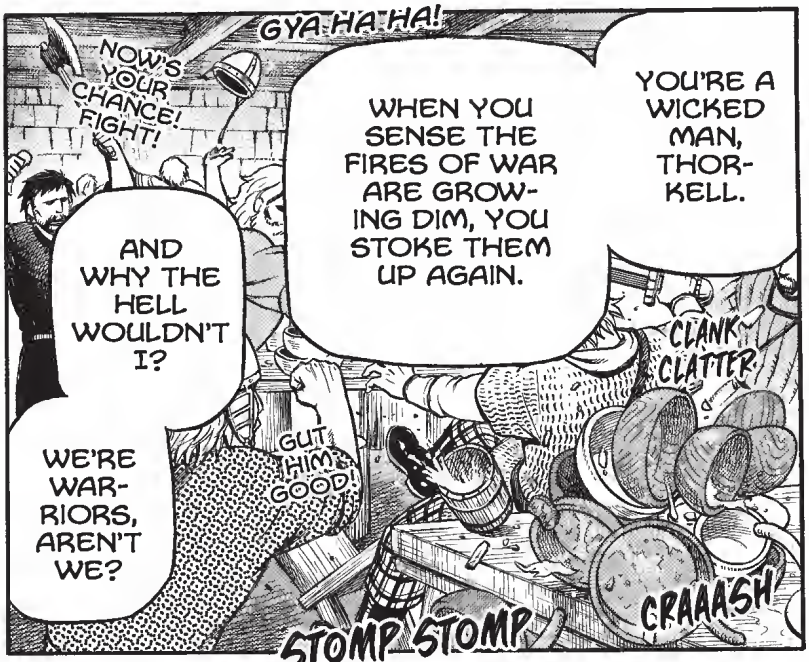
THEN GET SOME MORE FROM THE NEXT VILLAGE OVER!
CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT THEY'LL DO IF THEY GO HUNGRY?!
MASTER, WE'RE ALL OUT OF SALT PORK!
THE WINE'S NEARLY RUN DRY AS WELL!

DO YOU THINK I HAVEN'T TRIED?!!
WE'RE ALMOST AT WIT'S END, MASTER.
CAN'T YOU CONVINCE THEM TO STAY SOMEWHERE ELSE?

SAUSAGE RUNNING LOW, TOO.
CURSE YOU AND YOUR ARMY OF RUFFIANS, THORKELL...
DO YOU MEAN TO EAT THIS VILLAGE BARE?!
SALT PORK, WINE...

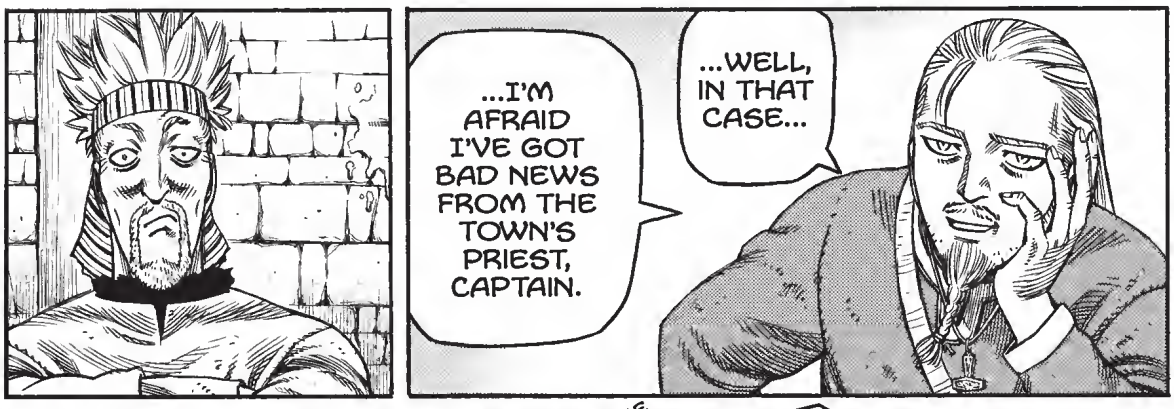

DAMN, THESE BARBARIANS ARE A PESTILENCE...
THERE MUST BE SOME WAY TO DRIVE THEM OUT OF OUR TOWN...
STOP SNIVELING!
WE'VE STOOPED TO SERVING FOOD FOR DANES...
AT THIS RATE, THEY MIGHT AS WELL BE PILLAGING!
ARE YOU SURE THEY'RE ON ENGLAND'S SIDE?
SOB SOB
SNIFF...

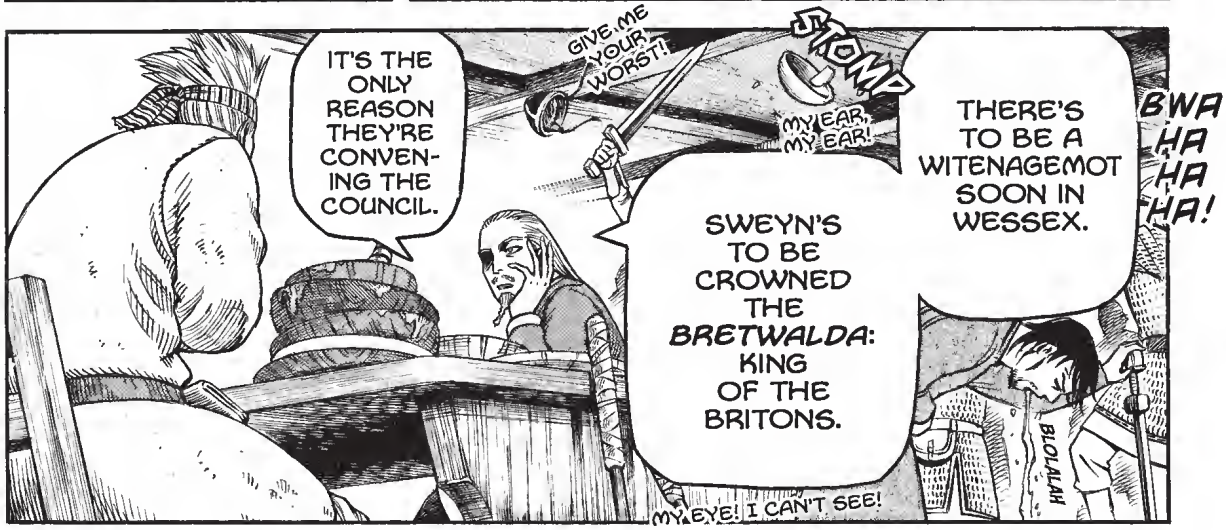
GEH HA HA
AAARGH!
MORALE'S BEEN TERRIBLE HERE LATELY. THEY NEED SOMETHING TO PERK THEM UP A BIT.
NO DOUBT EDMUND WOULD HAVE A PLAN FOR THE BOY.
HA
CRASH
CRAKK
I MEAN, IF CANUTE WAS GONNA SLIP OUT OF OUR HANDS ANYWAY, WE MIGHT AS WELL HAVE GIVEN HIM TO THE ENGLISH.
WHOA! HE'S DEAD!


GYA HA HA!
NOW'S YOUR CHANCE! FIGHT!
AND WHY THE HELL WOULDN'T I?
WE'RE WARRIORS, AREN'T WE?
WHEN YOU SENSE THE FIRES OF WAR ARE GROWING DIM, YOU STOKE THEM UP AGAIN.
YOU'RE A WICKED MAN, THORKELL.
CLANK~ CLATTER
GUT HIM GOOD!
STOMP STOMP
CRAAASH

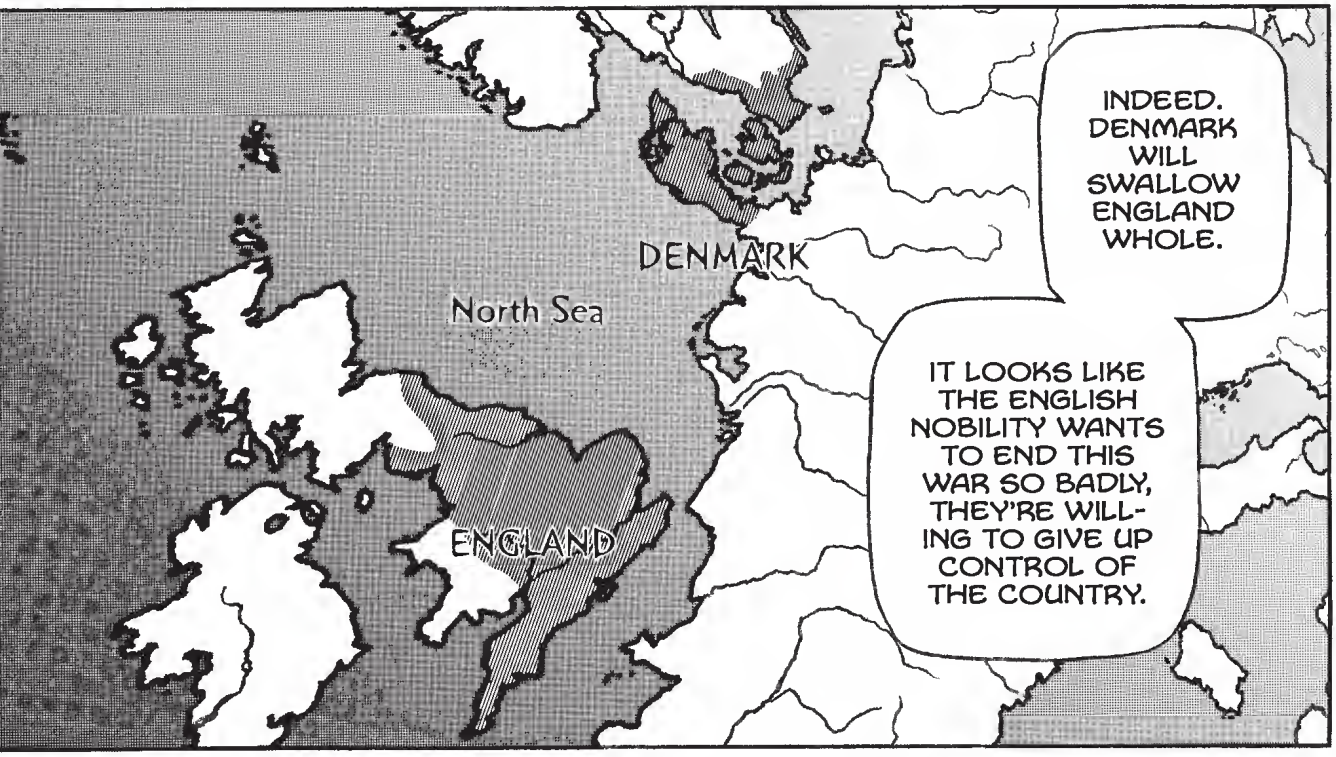
WHAT?
?
HEH HEH HEH!

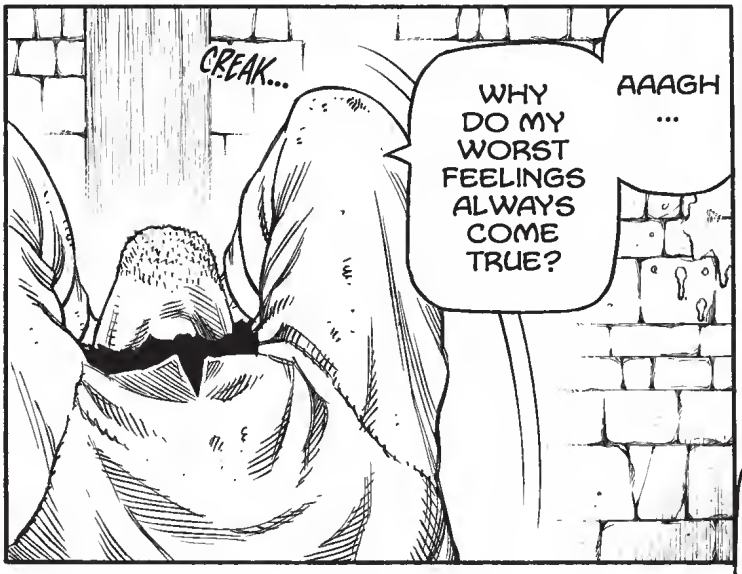
I'LL DO ANYTHING I CAN TO ENSURE THIS WAR LASTS AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.
HMPH!
AND A BATTLE-FIELD THAT MAKES A WARRIOR.
IT'S THE WATER THAT MAKES A FISH.

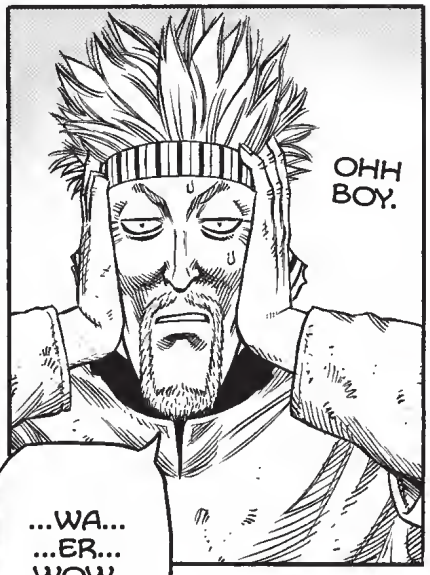

...I'M AFRAID I'VE GOT BAD NEWS FROM THE TOWN'S PRIEST, CAPTAIN.
...WELL, IN THAT CASE...

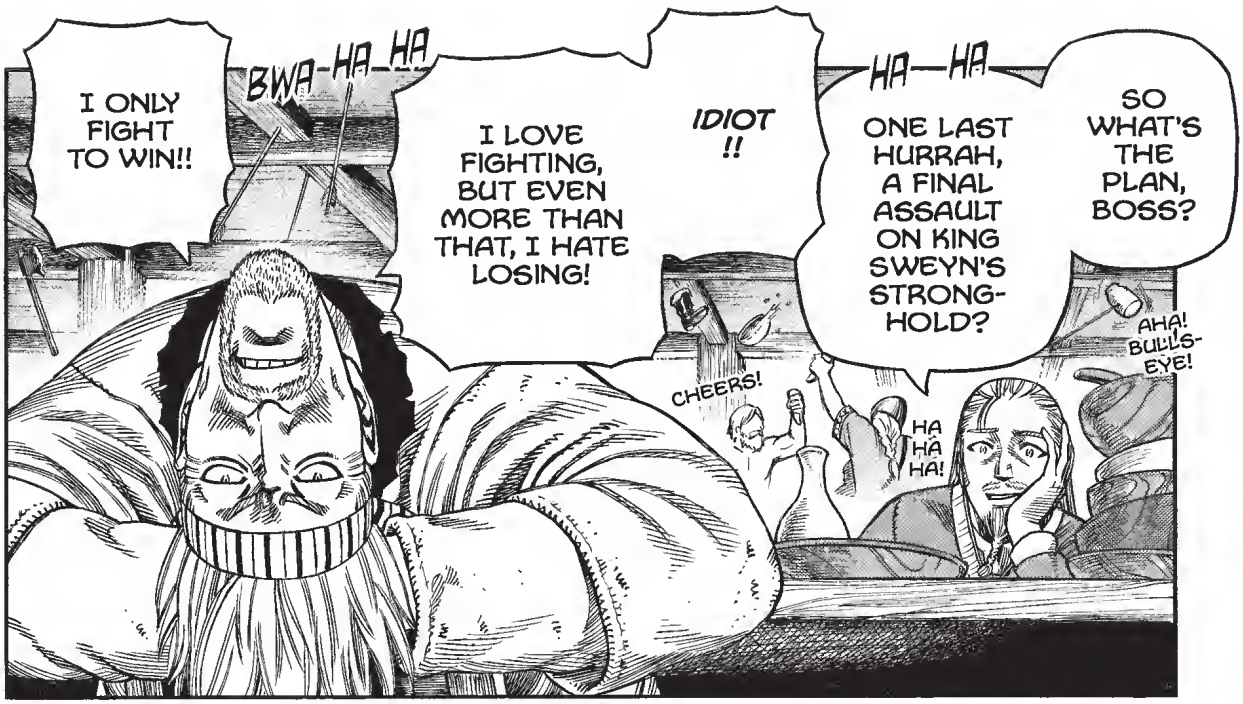

IT'S THE ONLY REASON THEY'RE CONVEN-ING THE COUNCIL.
GIVE ME YOUR WORST!
JIOMP
MY EAR, MY EAR!
SWEYN'S TO BE CROWNED THE BRETWALDA: KING OF THE BRITONS.
THERE'S TO BE A WITENAGEMOT SOON IN WESSEX.
BWA HA HA HA!
BLOLALAH
MY EYE! I CAN'T SEE!

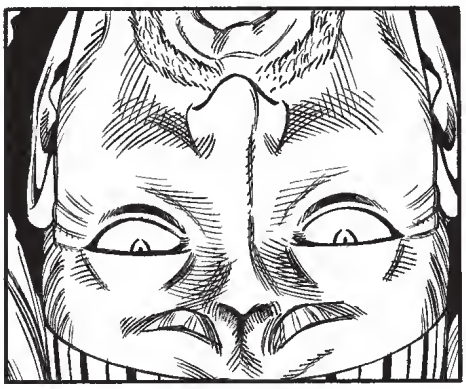
HUH?
...WHA? BUT... THAT'S UNCONDI-TIONAL SURRENDER!
...HUH?

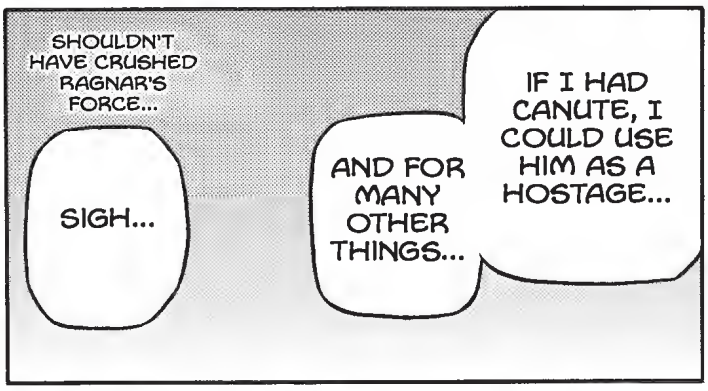

DENMARK
North Sea
ENGLAND
IT LOOKS LIKE THE ENGLISH NOBILITY WANTS TO END THIS WAR SO BADLY, THEY'RE WILL-ING TO GIVE UP CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY.
INDEED. DENMARK WILL SWALLOW ENGLAND WHOLE.


CREAK...
WHY DO MY WORST FEELINGS ALWAYS COME TRUE?
AAAGH ...

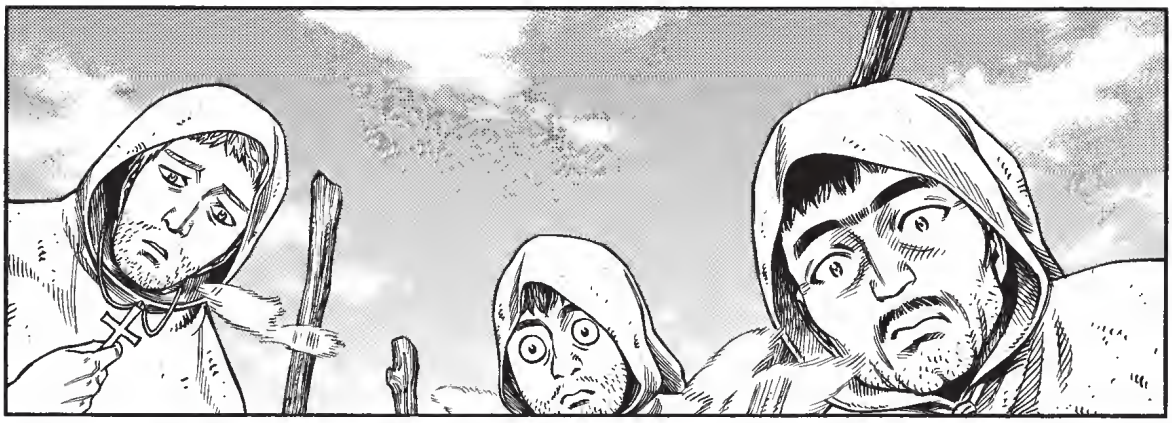

OHH BOY.
...WA... ...ER... WOW.

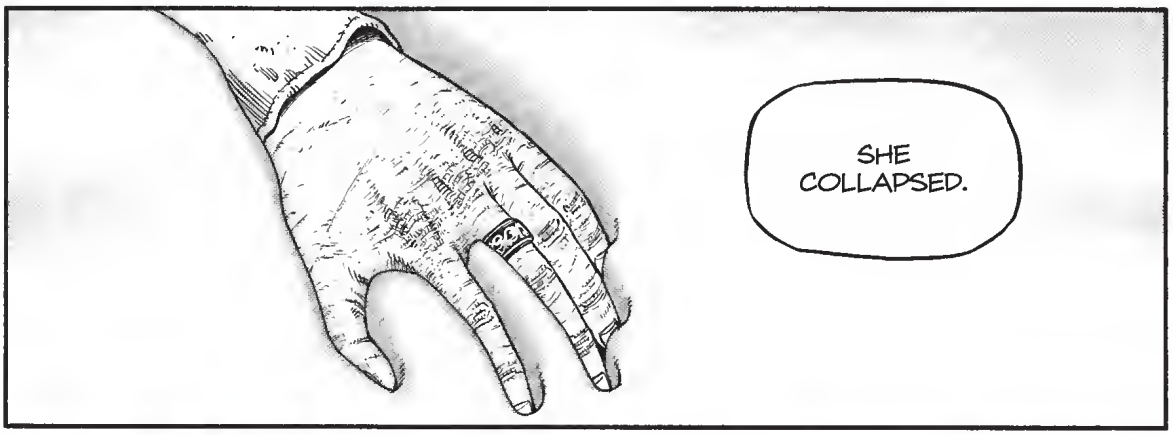

I ONLY FIGHT TO WIN!!
BWA-HA-HA
I LOVE FIGHTING, BUT EVEN MORE THAN THAT, I HATE LOSING!
IDIOT !!
HA—HA
ONE LAST HURRAH, A FINAL ASSAULT ON KING SWEYN'S STRONG-HOLD?
SO WHAT'S THE PLAN, BOSS?
AHA! BULL'S-EYE!
CHEERS!
HA HA HA!



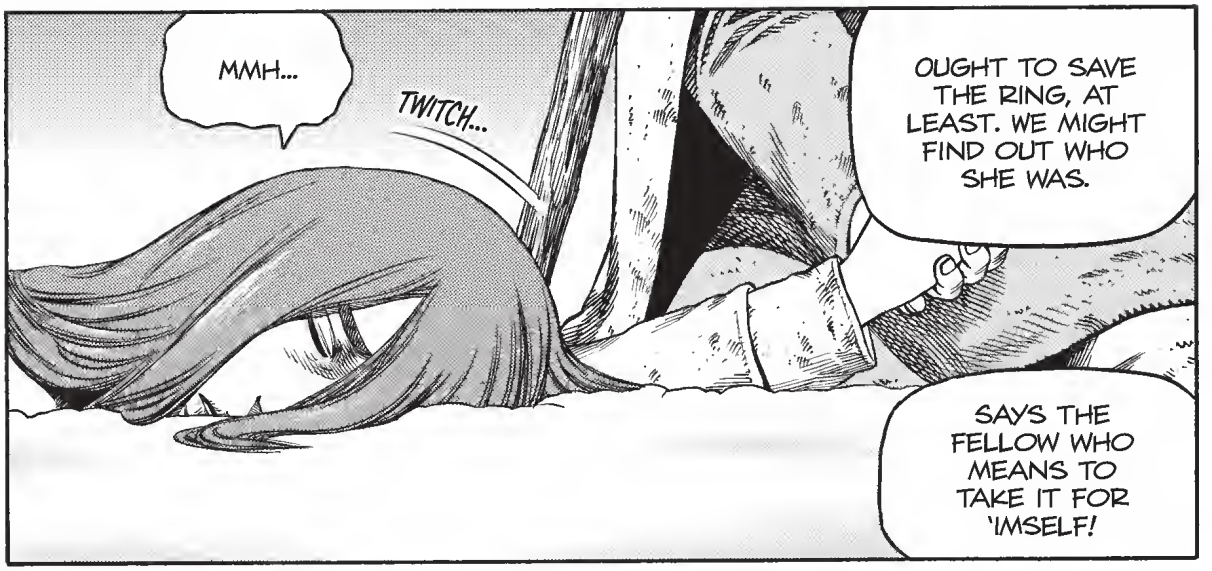

SHOULDN'T HAVE CRUSHED RAGNAR'S FORCE...
SIGH...
AND FOR MANY OTHER THINGS...
IF I HAD CANUTE, I COULD USE HIM AS A HOSTAGE...

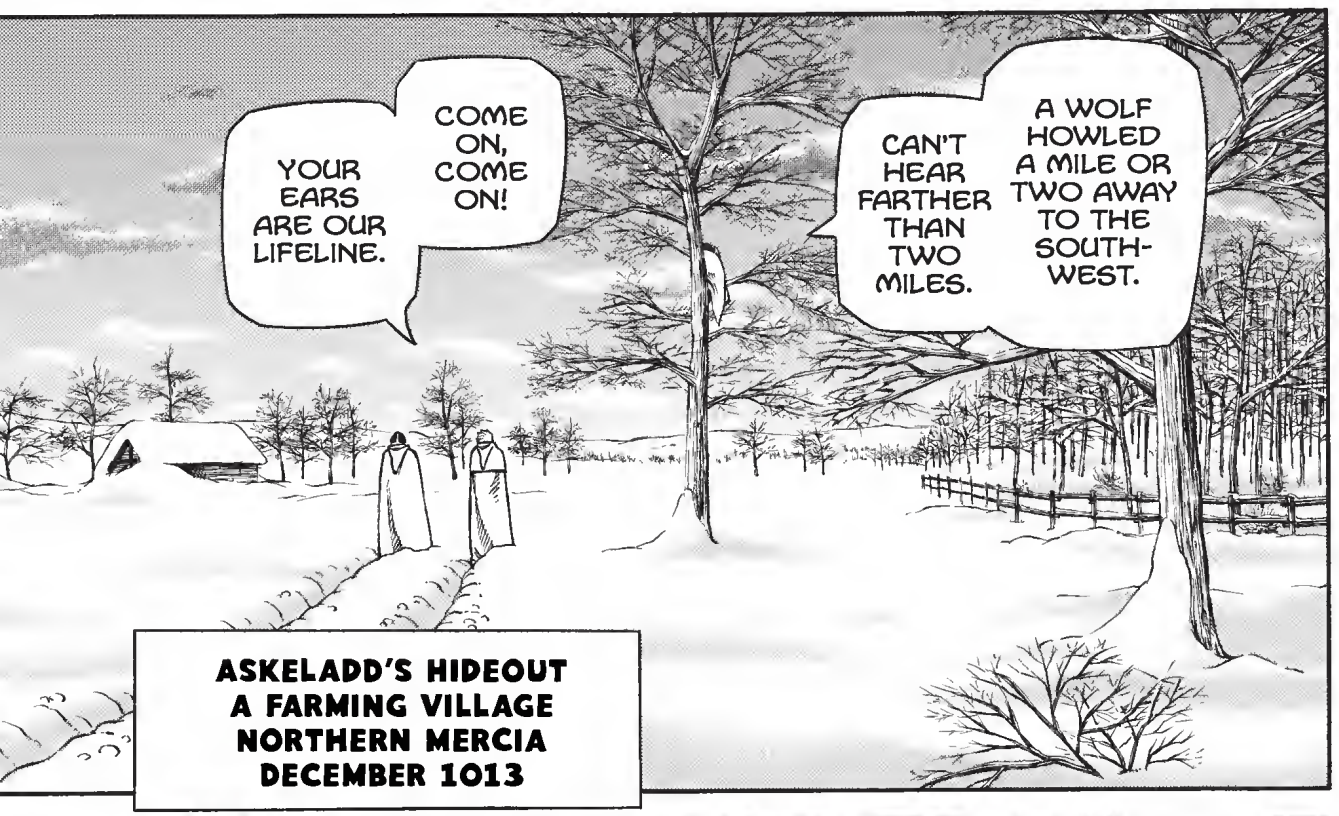
IF ONLY THE ENTIRE WORLD COULD BE AT WAR, ALL THE TIME...
THIS IS NO FUN...



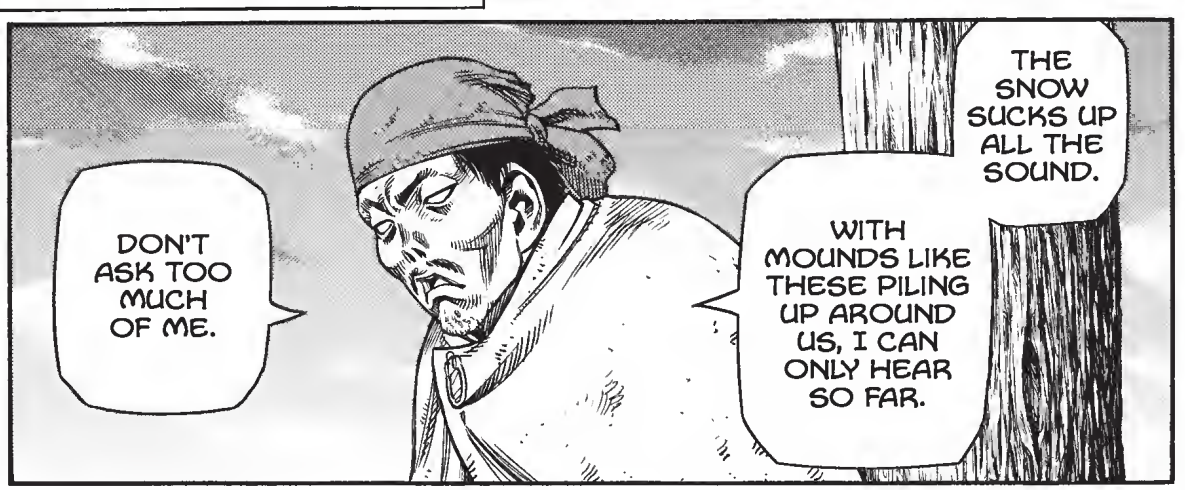

SHE COLLAPSED.

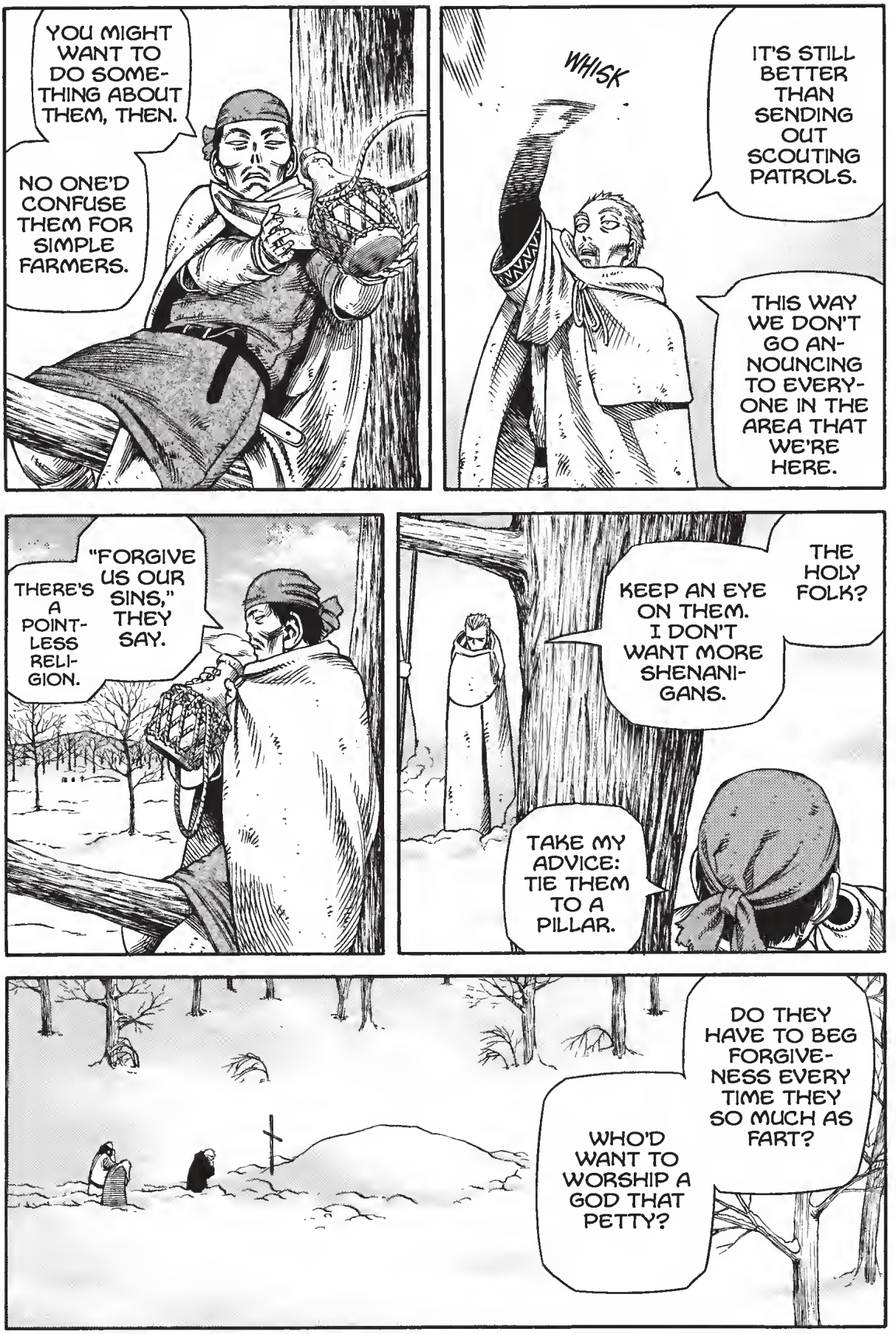
SHE'S GOT A RING.
MIGHT ACTUALLY BE OF NOBLE BIRTH.
THE POOR THING...

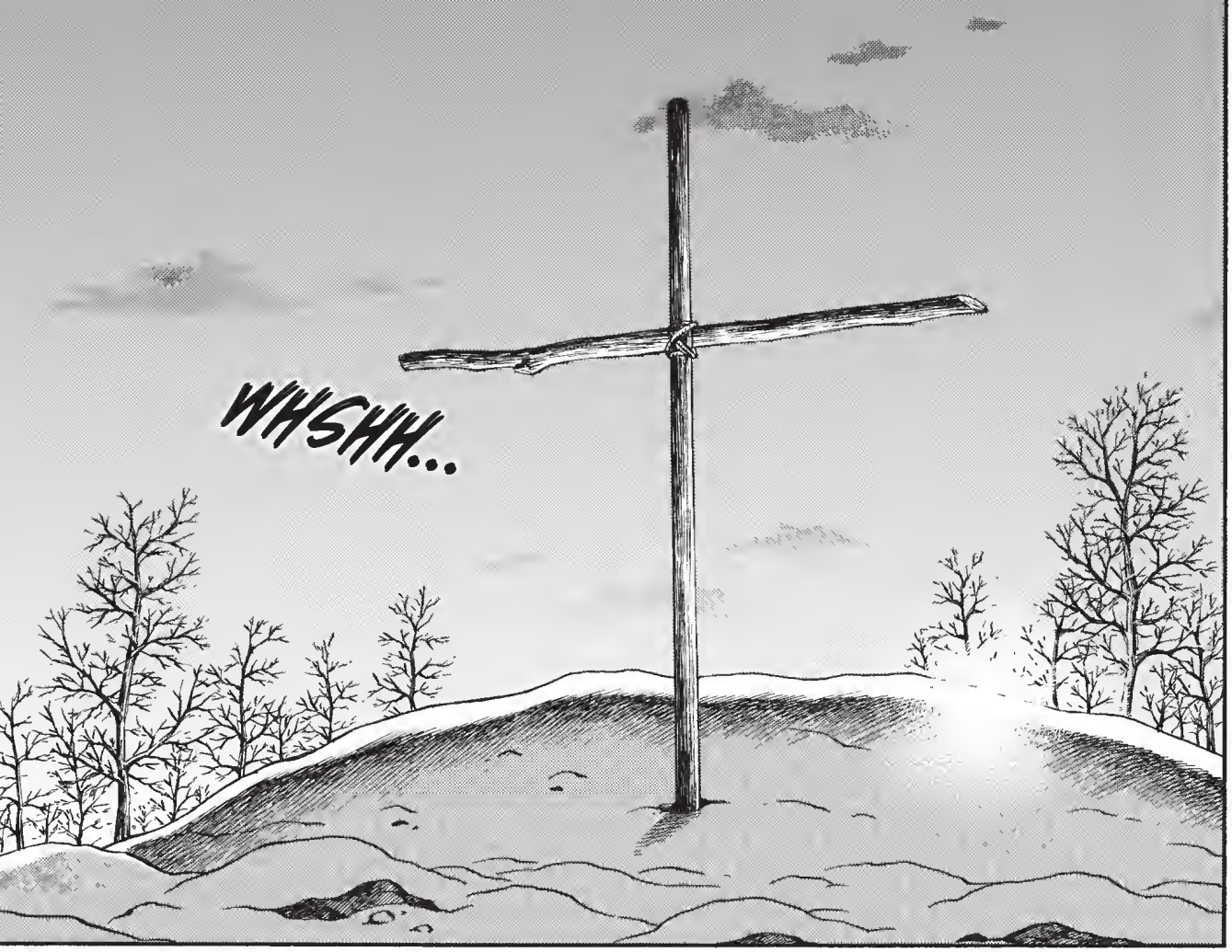

MMH...
TWITCH...
OUGHT TO SAVE THE RING, AT LEAST. WE MIGHT FIND OUT WHO SHE WAS.
SAYS THE FELLOW WHO MEANS TO TAKE IT FOR 'IMSELF!

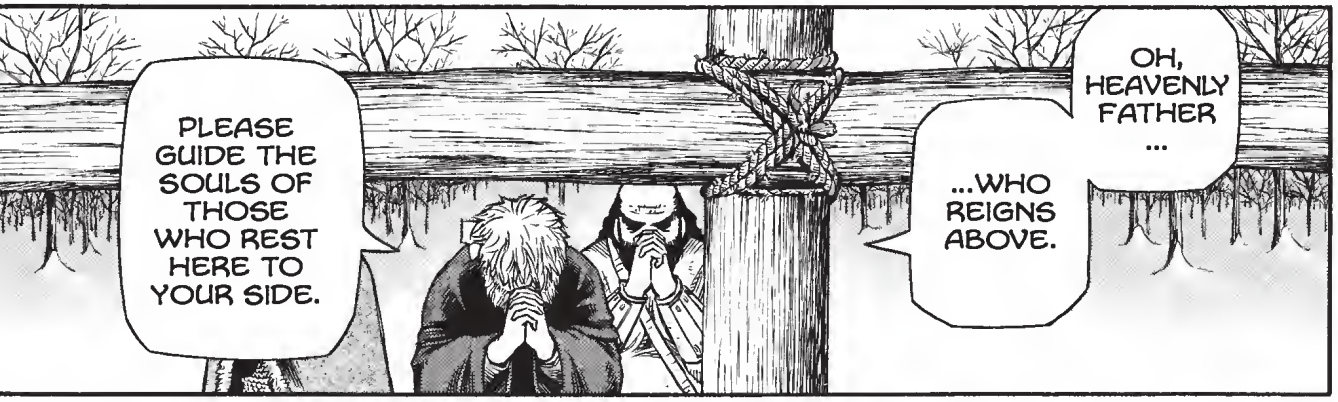


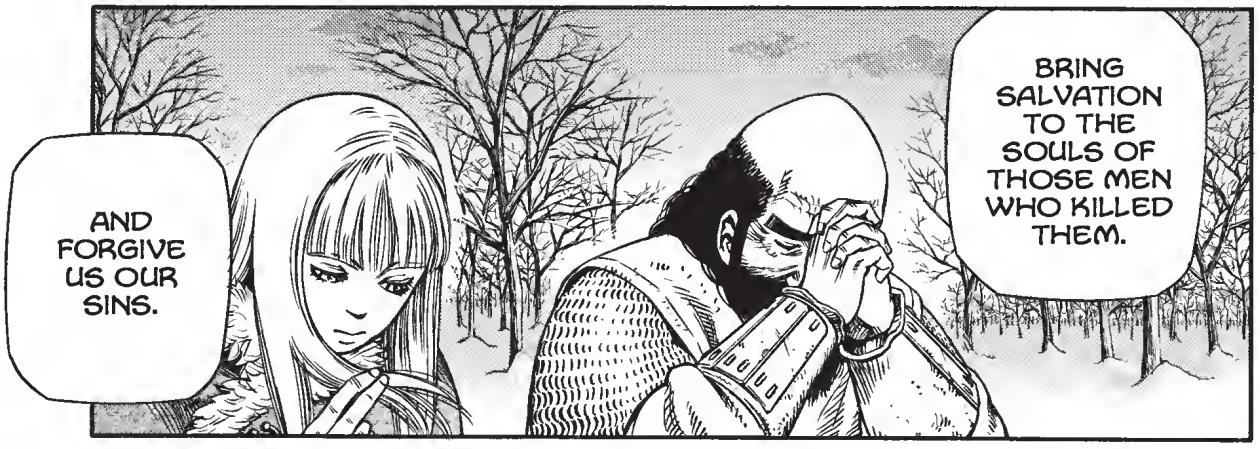
ASKELADD'S HIDEOUT
A FARMING VILLAGE
NORTHERN MERCIA
DECEMBER 1013



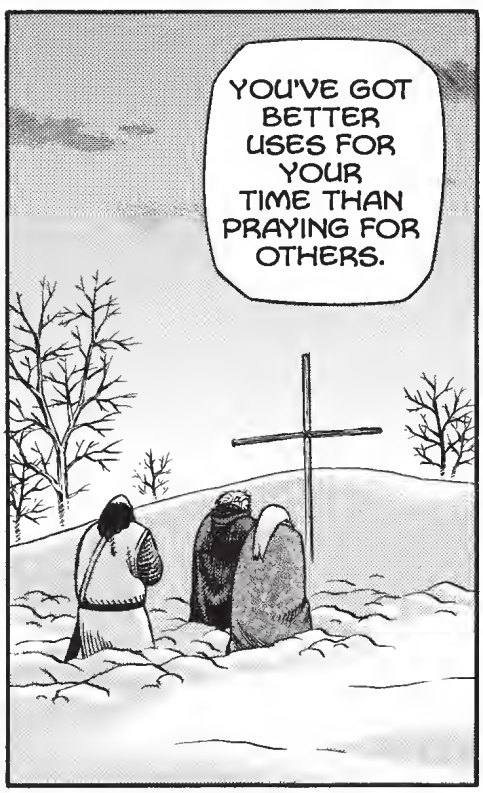

YOU MIGHT WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THEM, THEN.
NO ONE'D CONFUSE THEM FOR SIMPLE FARMERS.
WHISK
IT'S STILL BETTER THAN SENDING OUT SCOUTING PATROLS.
THIS WAY WE DON'T GO ANNOUNCING TO EVERYONE IN THE AREA THAT WE'RE HERE.
THERE'S A POINTLESS RELIGION.
"FORGIVE US OUR SINS," THEY SAY.
THE HOLY FOLK?
KEEP AN EYE ON THEM. I DON'T WANT MORE SHENANIGANS.
TAKE MY ADVICE: TIE THEM TO A PILLAR.
DO THEY HAVE TO BEG FORGIVENESS EVERY TIME THEY SO MUCH AS FART?
WHO'D WANT TO WORSHIP A GOD THAT PETTY?

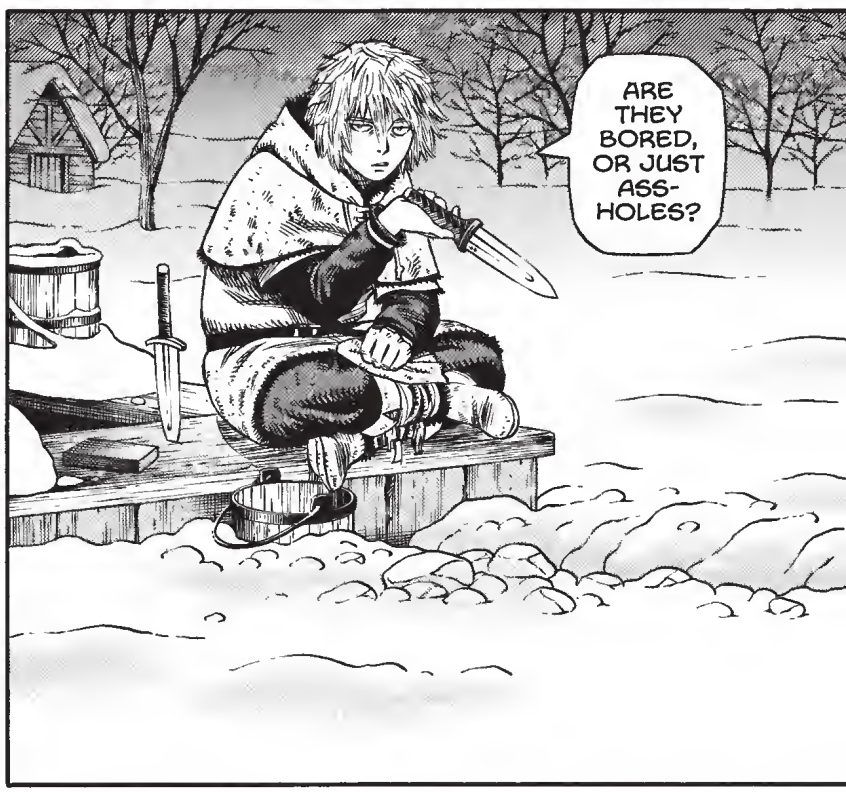

WHSHH...

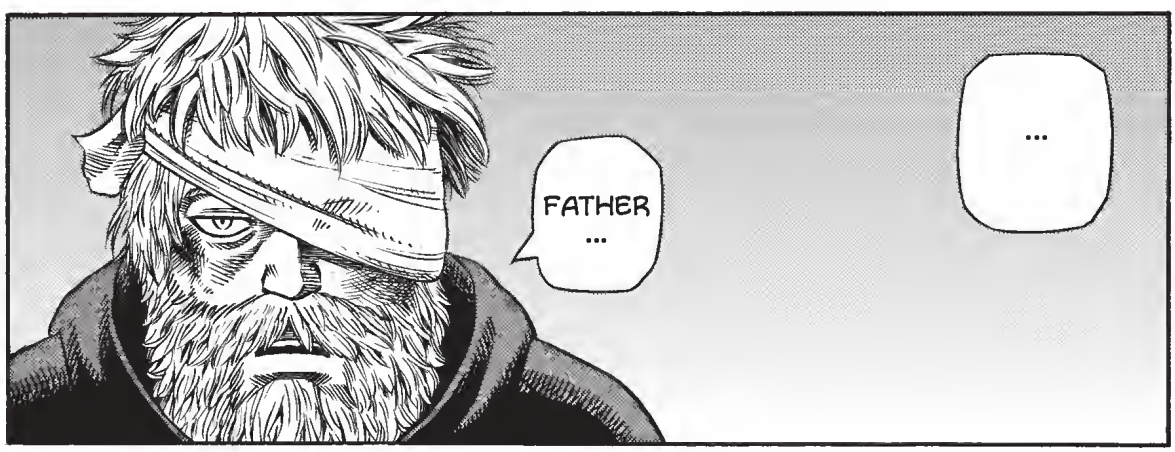

OH, HEAVENLY FATHER ...
...WHO REIGNS ABOVE.
PLEASE GUIDE THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO REST HERE TO YOUR SIDE.

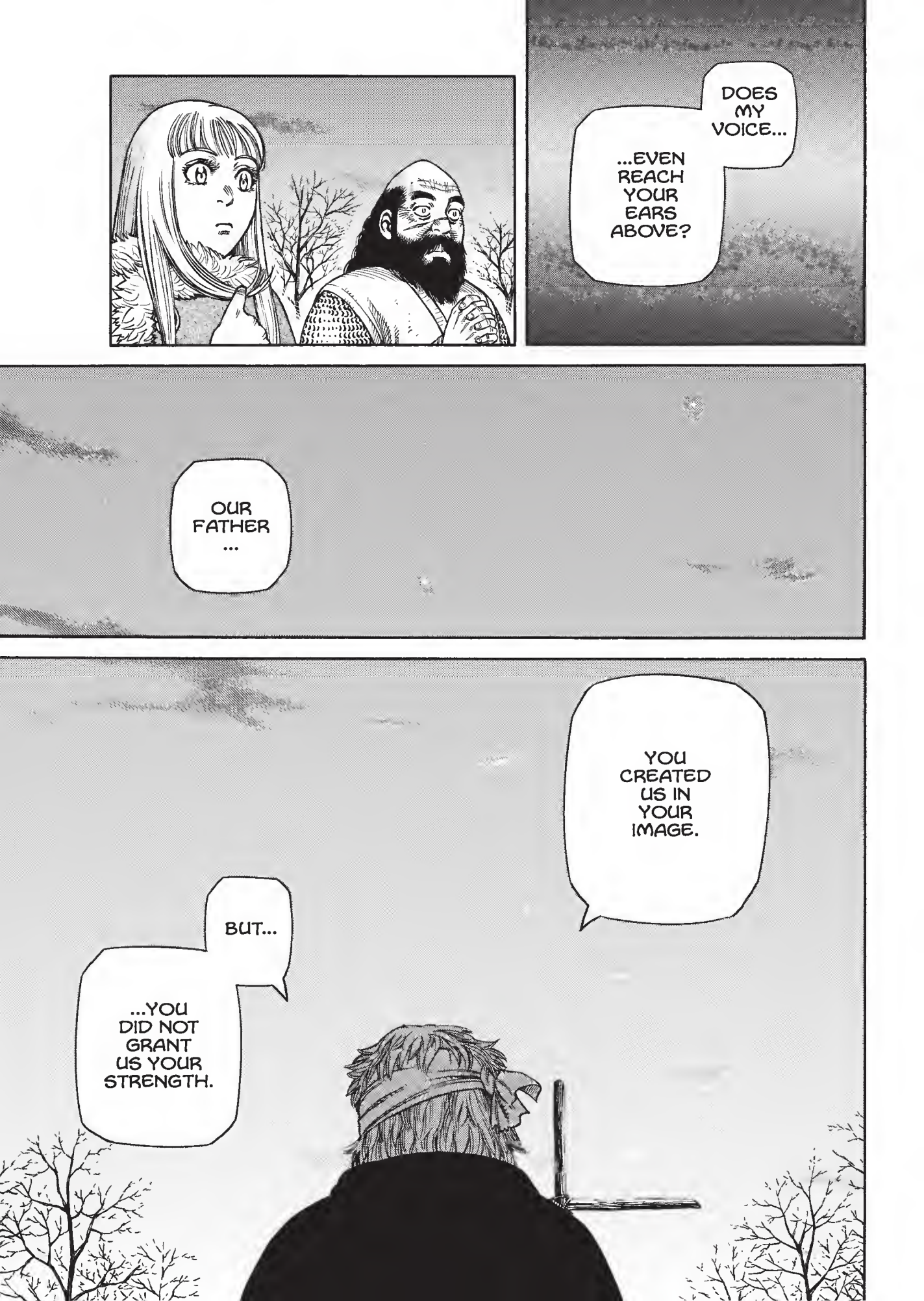

BRING SALVATION TO THE SOULS OF THOSE MEN WHO KILLED THEM.
AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS.

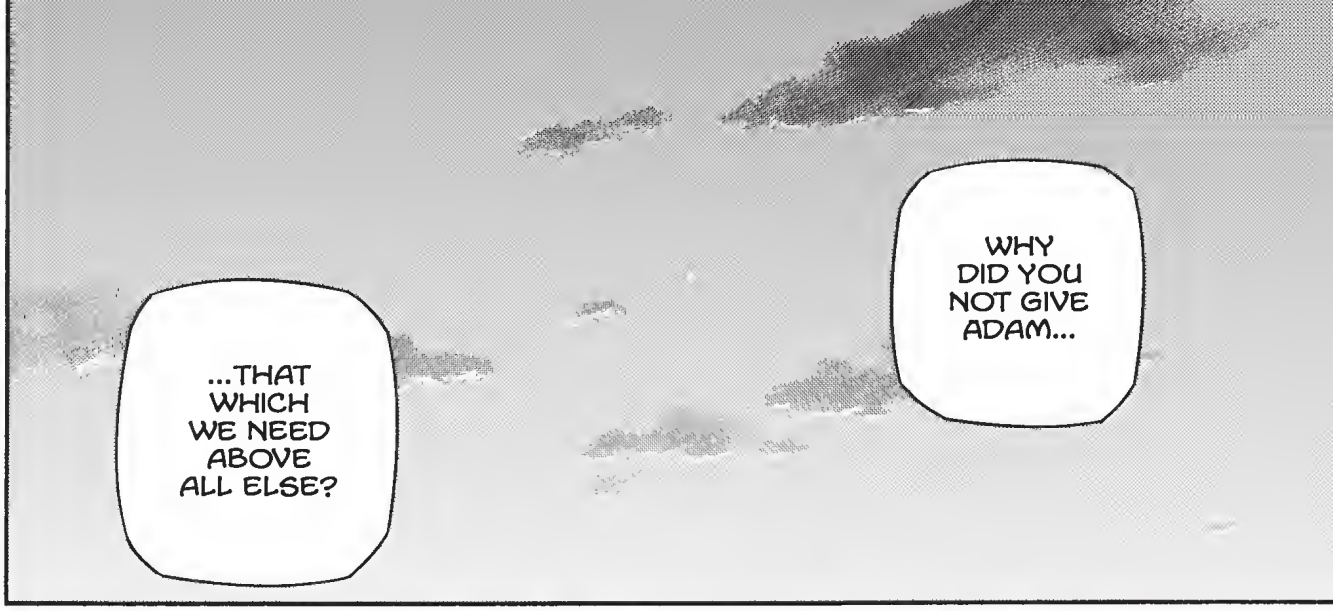
BAH.

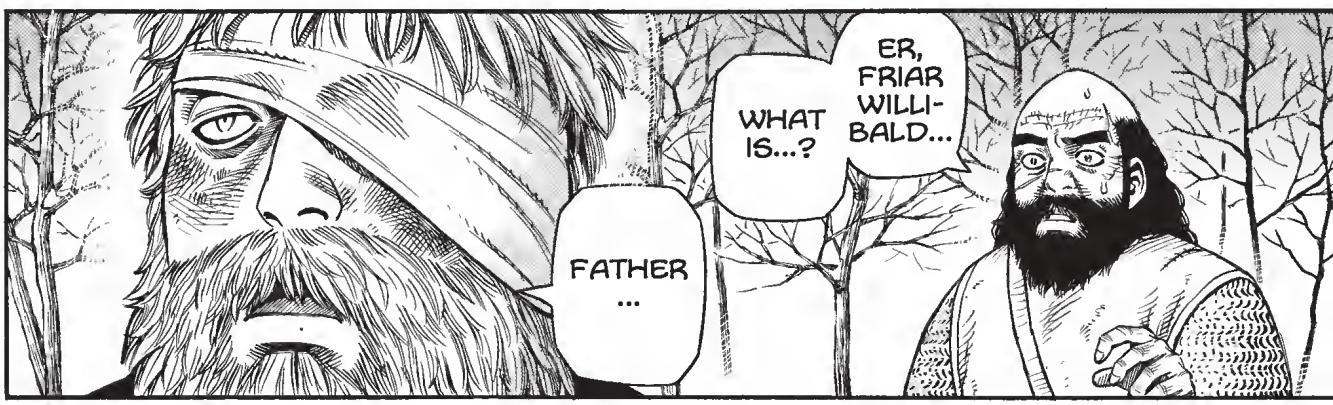

YOU'VE GOT BETTER USES FOR YOUR TIME THAN PRAYING FOR OTHERS.

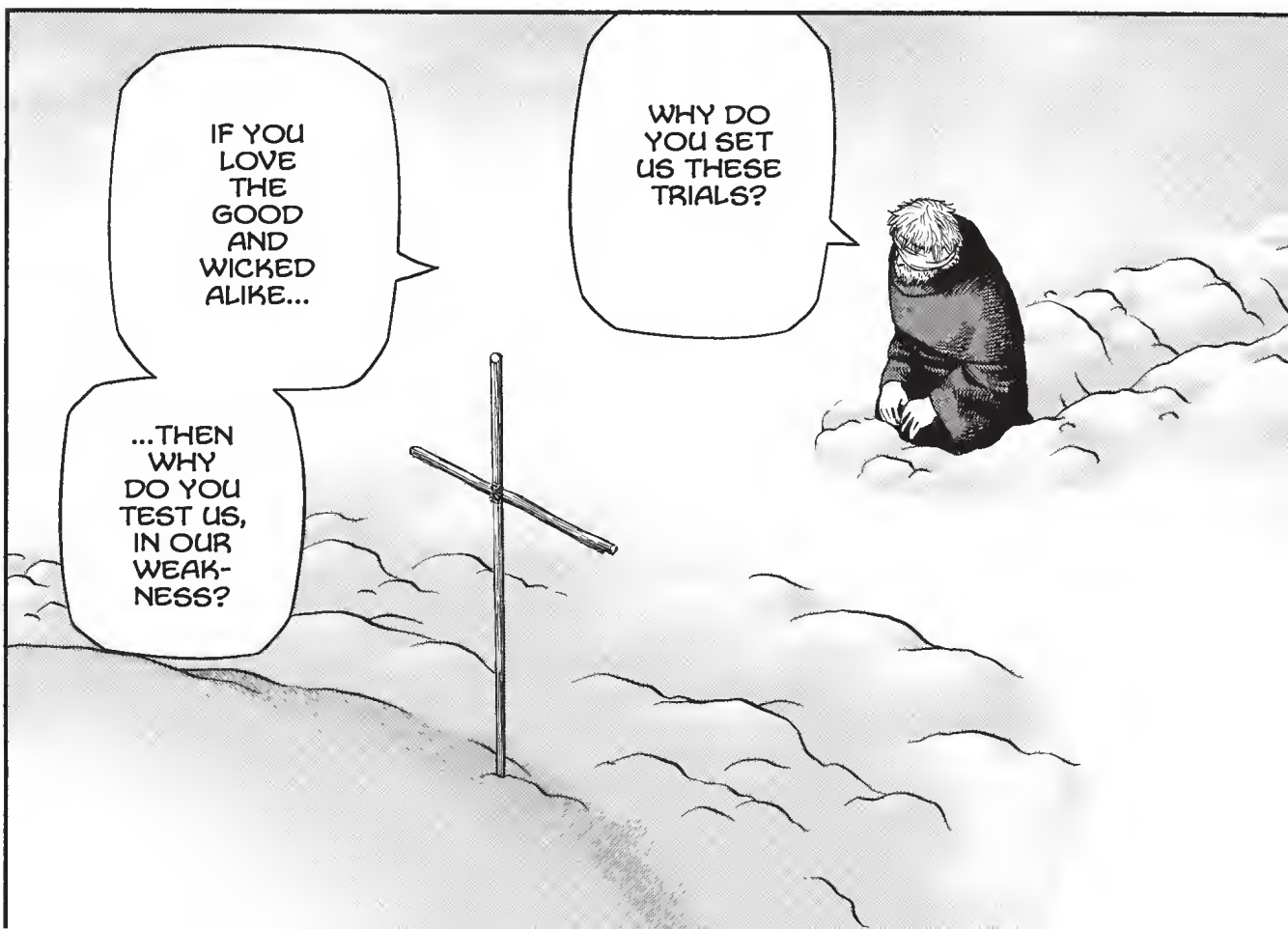

ARE THEY BORED, OR JUST ASS-HOLES?

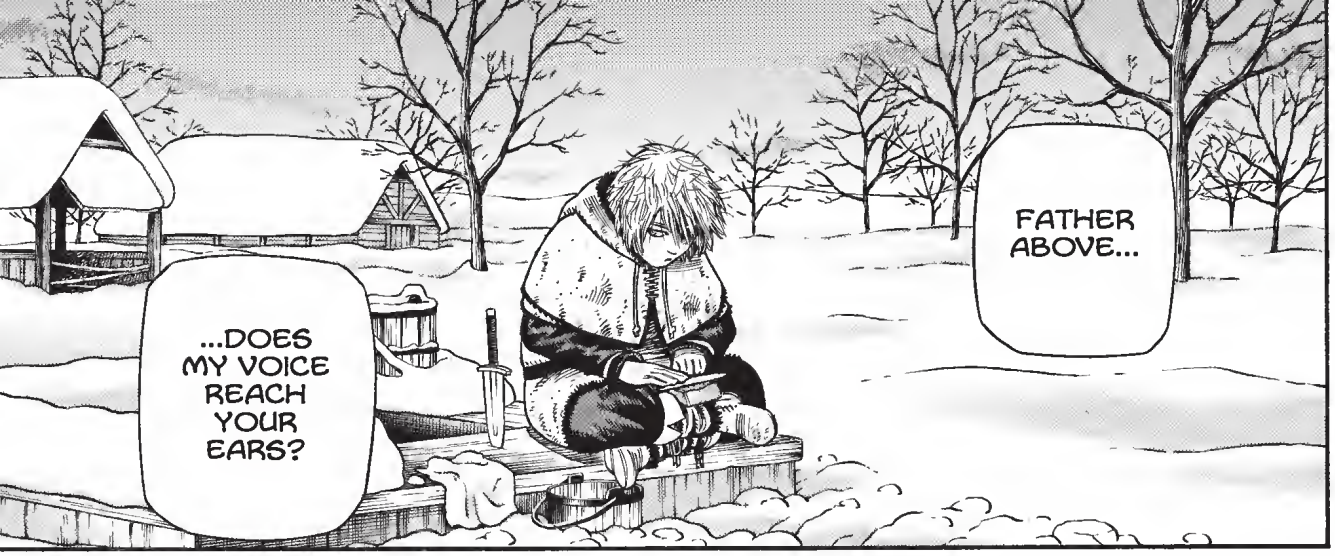

FATHER ...
...


DOES MY VOICE...
...EVEN REACH YOUR EARS ABOVE?
OUR FATHER ...
YOU CREATED US IN YOUR IMAGE.
BUT...
...YOU DID NOT GRANT US YOUR STRENGTH.

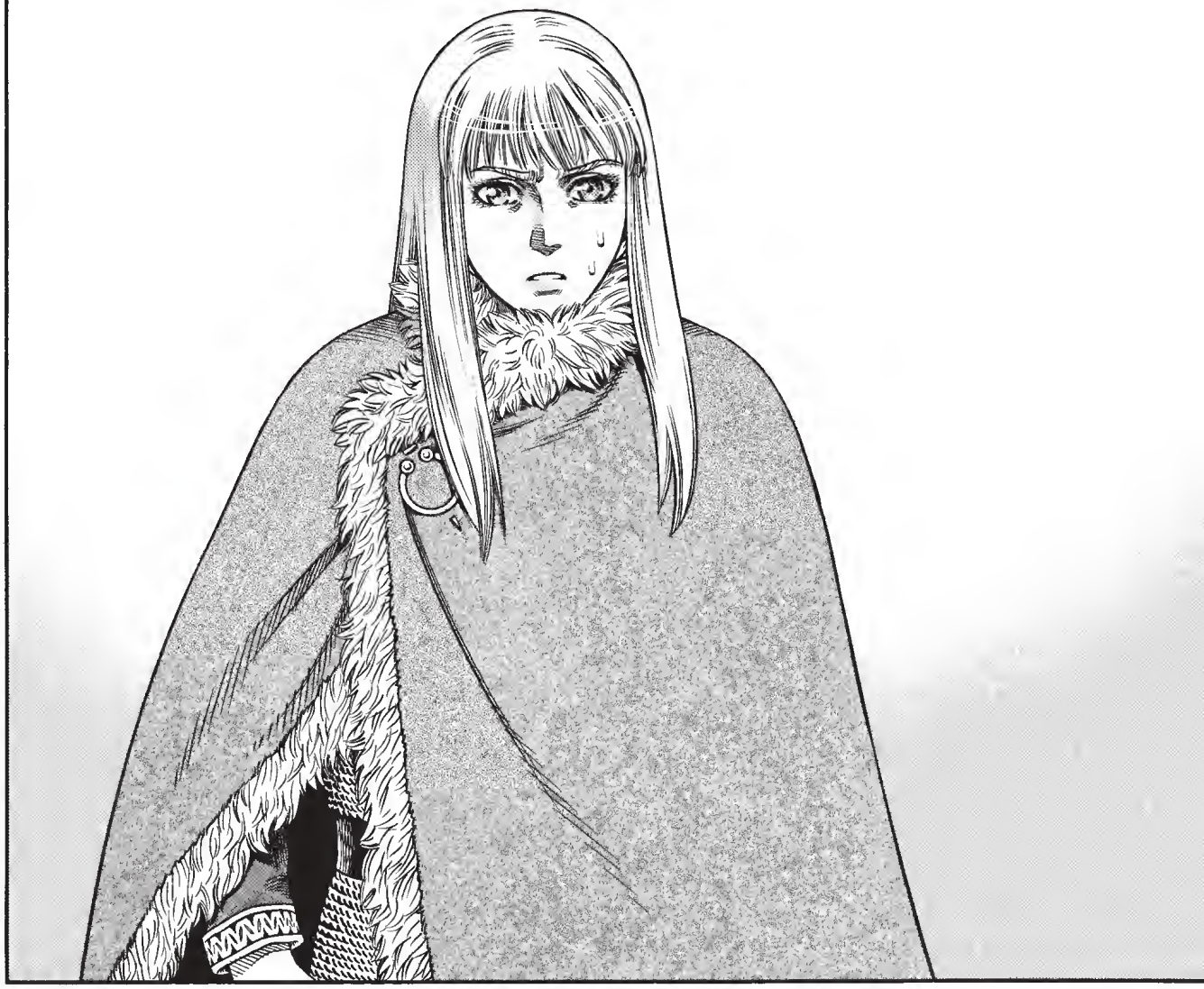

WHY DID YOU NOT GIVE ADAM...
...THAT WHICH WE NEED ABOVE ALL ELSE?


ER, FRIAR WILLI-BALD...
WHAT IS...?
FATHER ...


WHY DO YOU SET US THESE TRIALS?
IF YOU LOVE THE GOOD AND WICKED ALIKE...
...THEN WHY DO YOU TEST US, IN OUR WEAK-NESS?

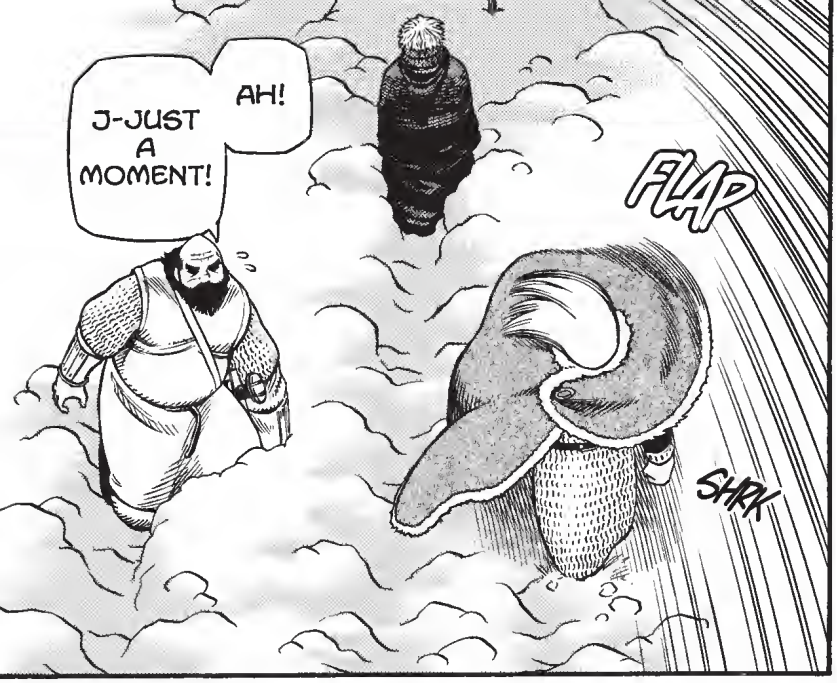

FATHER ABOVE...
...DOES MY VOICE REACH YOUR EARS?

OUR FATHER...
...I ADMIT...
...I BEGIN TO DOUBT YOUR LOVE.
SILENCE !!

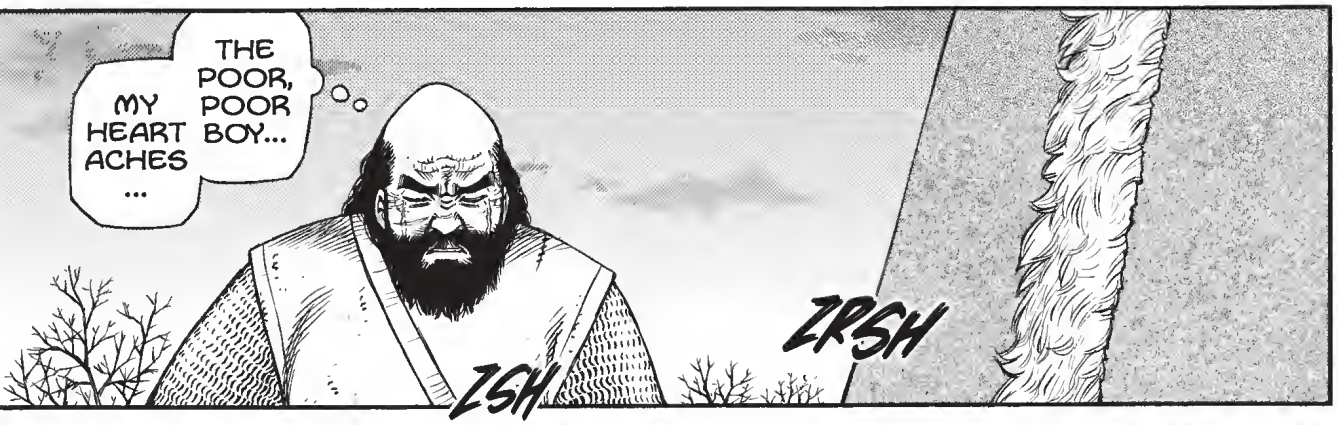


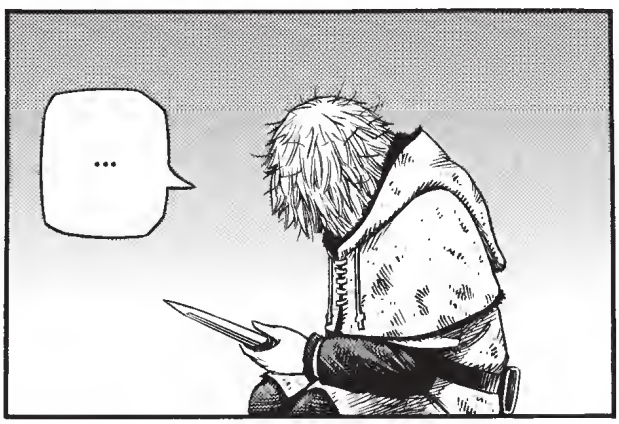
...
YOU DARE... TO DOUBT GOD...?
DOUBTING GOD'S LOVE IS THE LAST THING A DEVOUT CHRISTIAN SHOULD EVER DO!!
AND YOU CALL YOURSELF A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST?! YOU OUGHT TO BE ASHAMED!!

...
THERE IS NO FATHER...
...WHO WOULD NOT LOVE...
...HIS OWN SON!


AH!
J-JUST A MOMENT!
FLAP
SHRK

HIGH-NESS...


THE POOR, POOR BOY...
MY HEART ACHES ...
ZSH
ZRSH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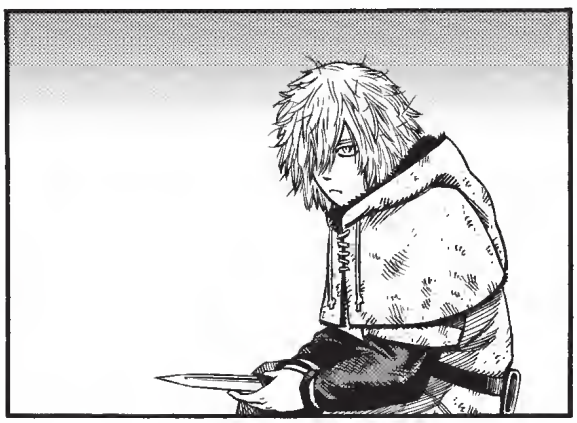
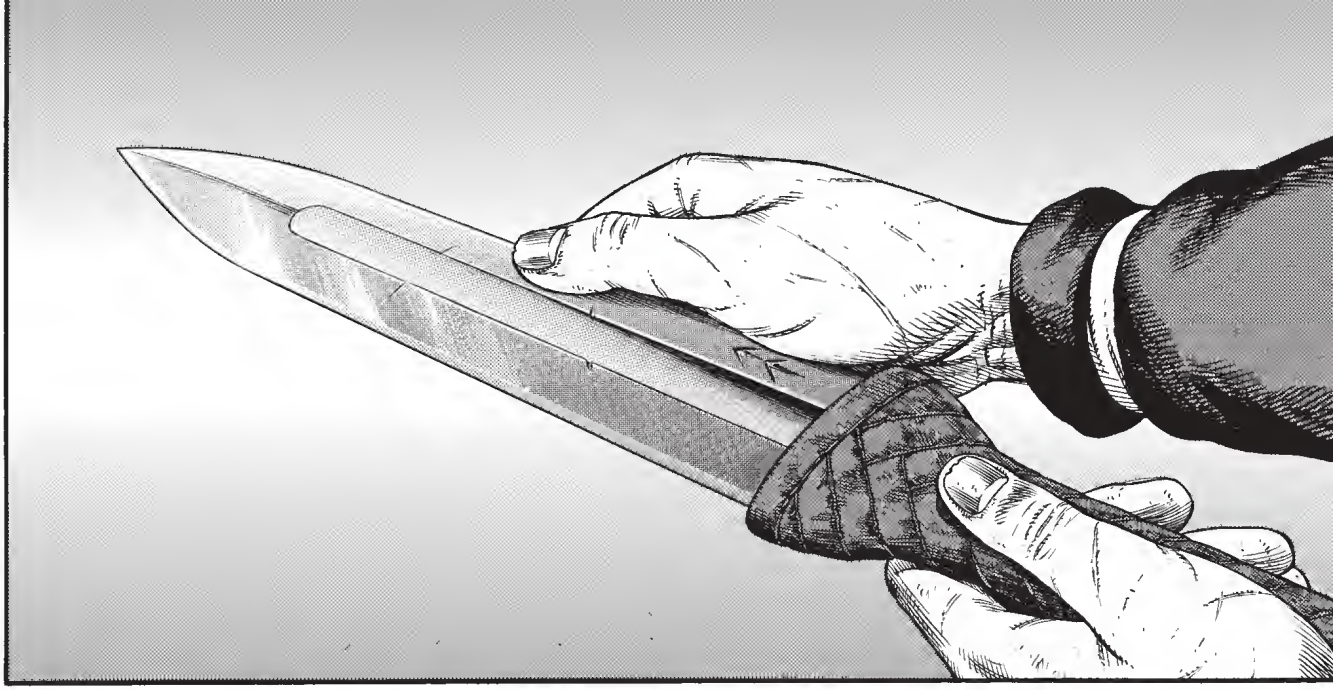
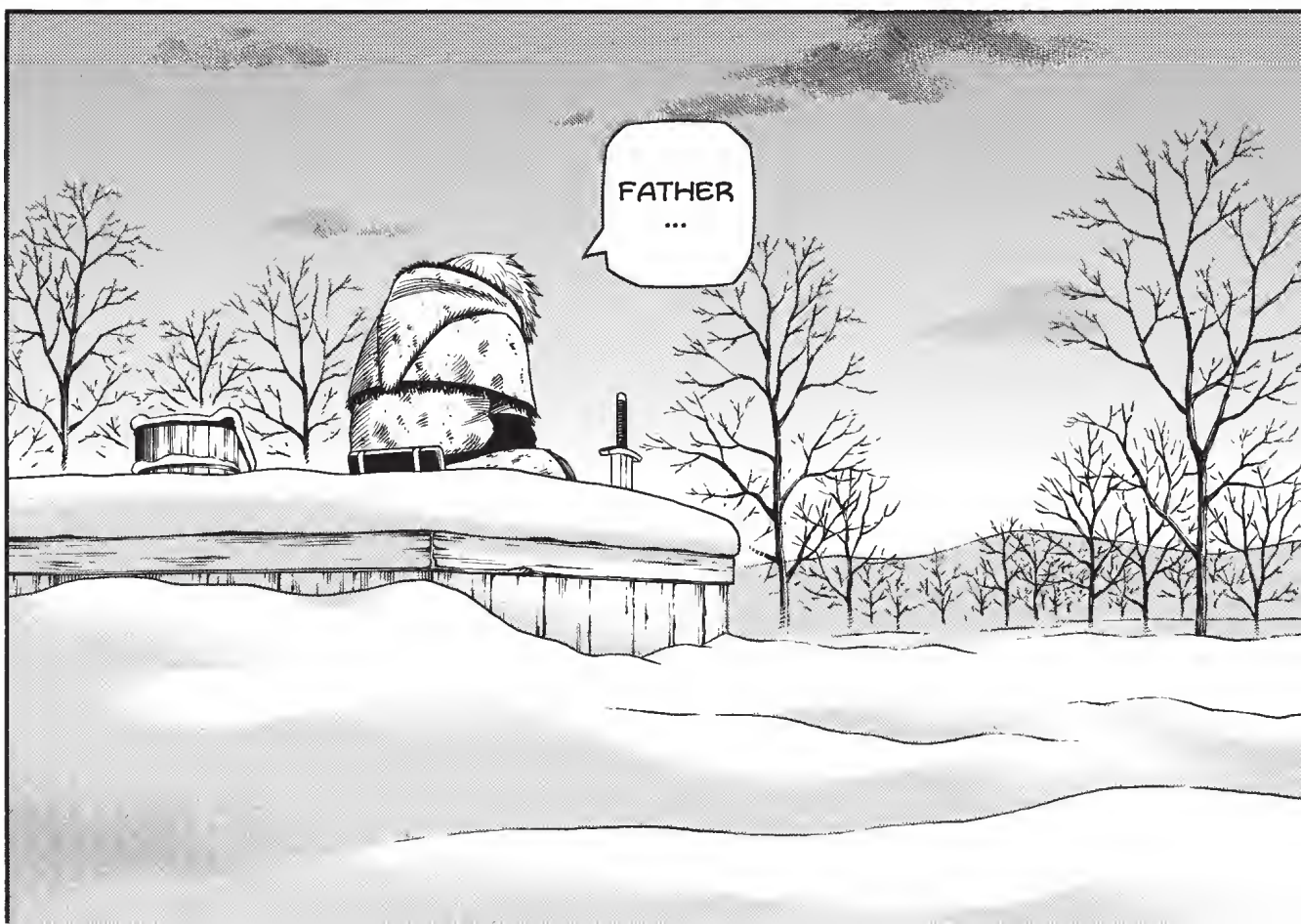
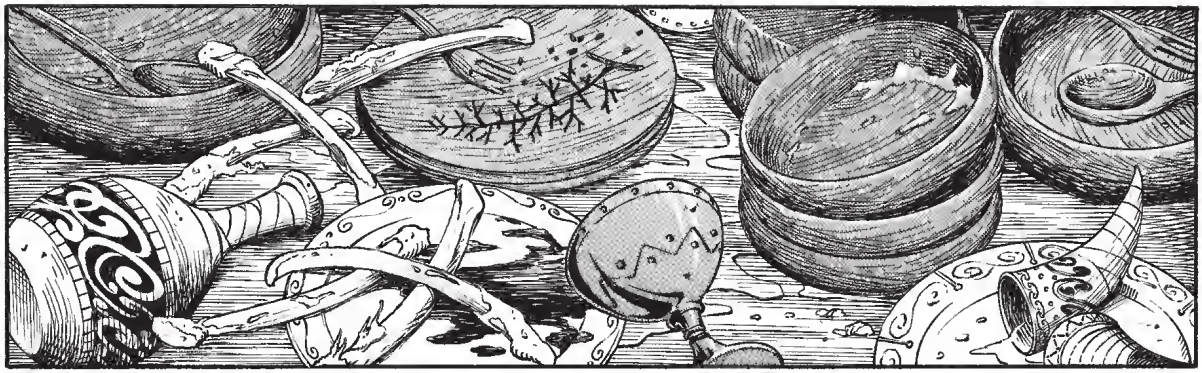
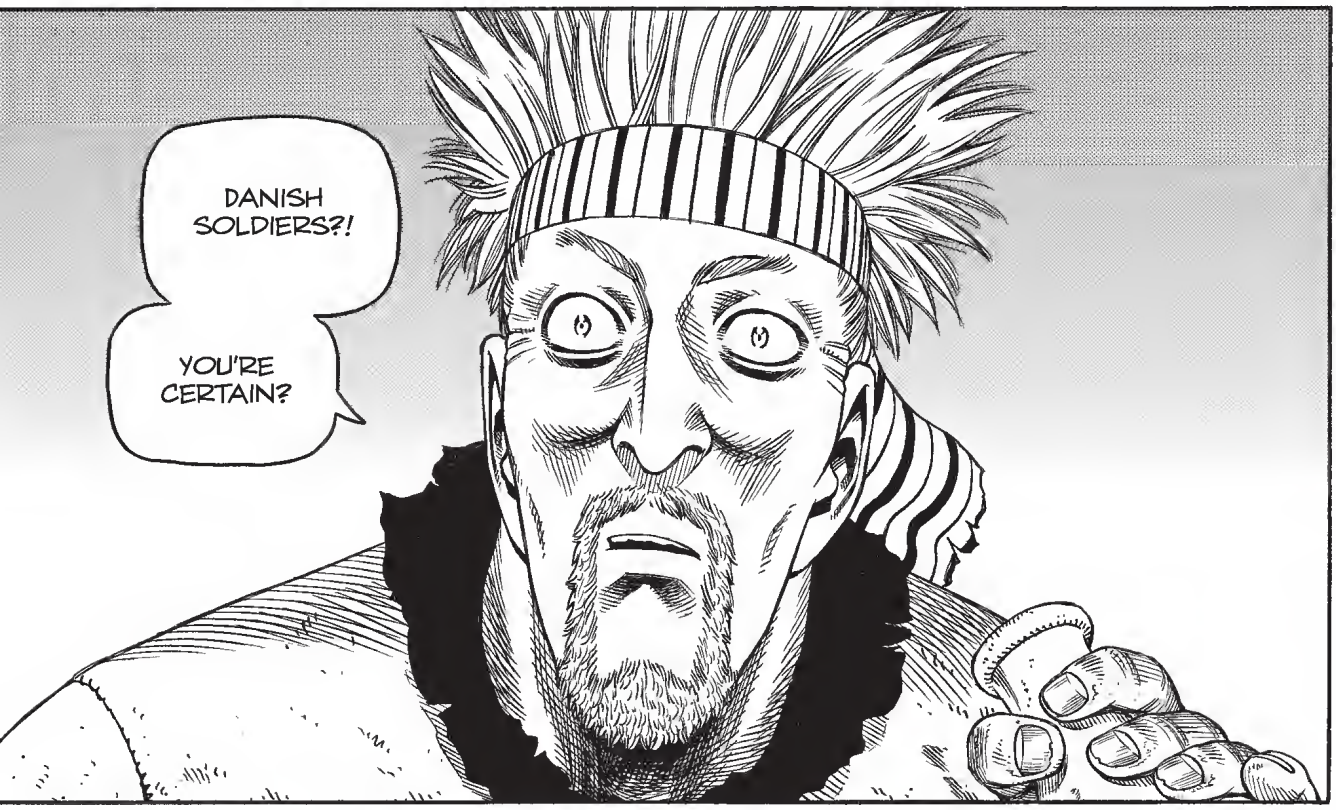
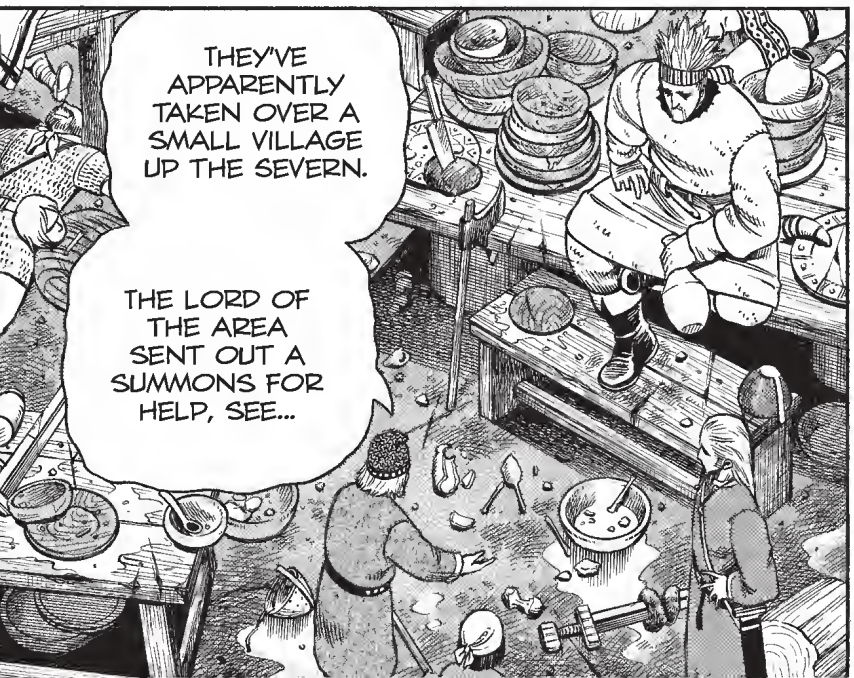





FATHER
...

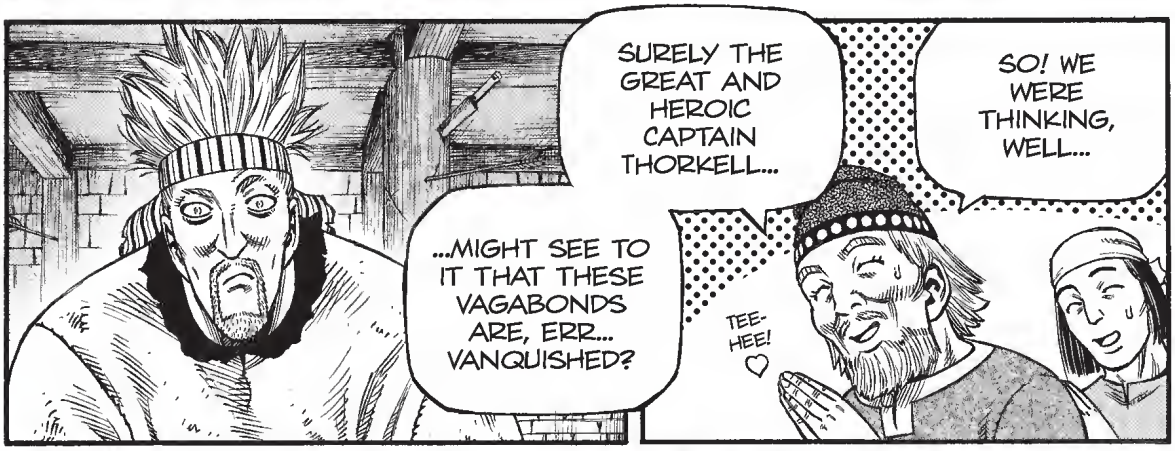


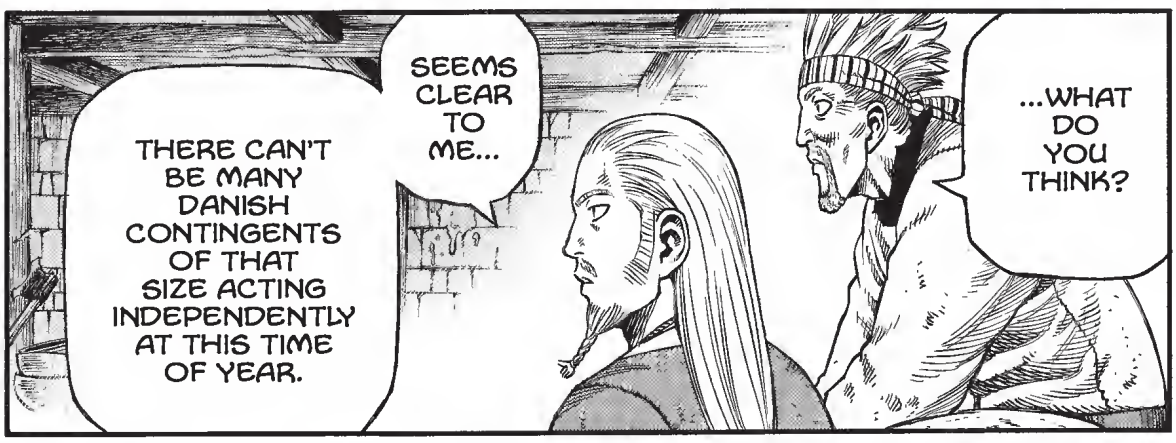

DANISH SOLDIERS?!
YOU'RE CERTAIN?

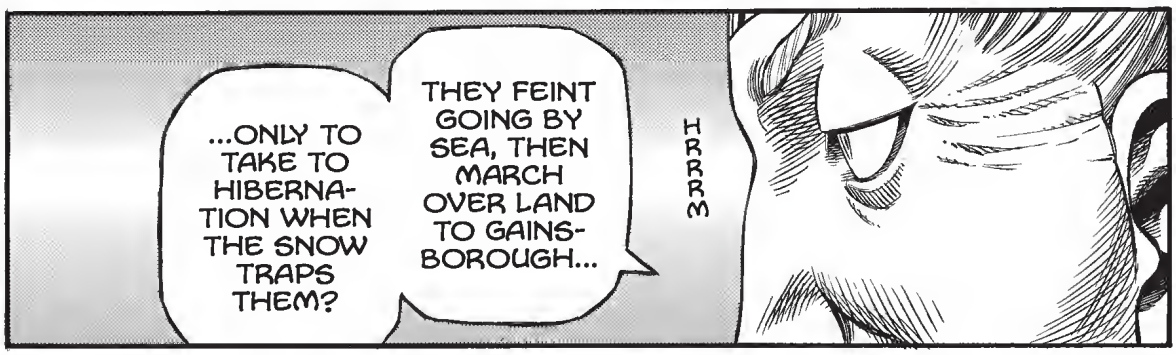

THEY'VE APPARENTLY TAKEN OVER A SMALL VILLAGE UP THE SEVERN.
THE LORD OF THE AREA SENT OUT A SUMMONS FOR HELP, SEE...

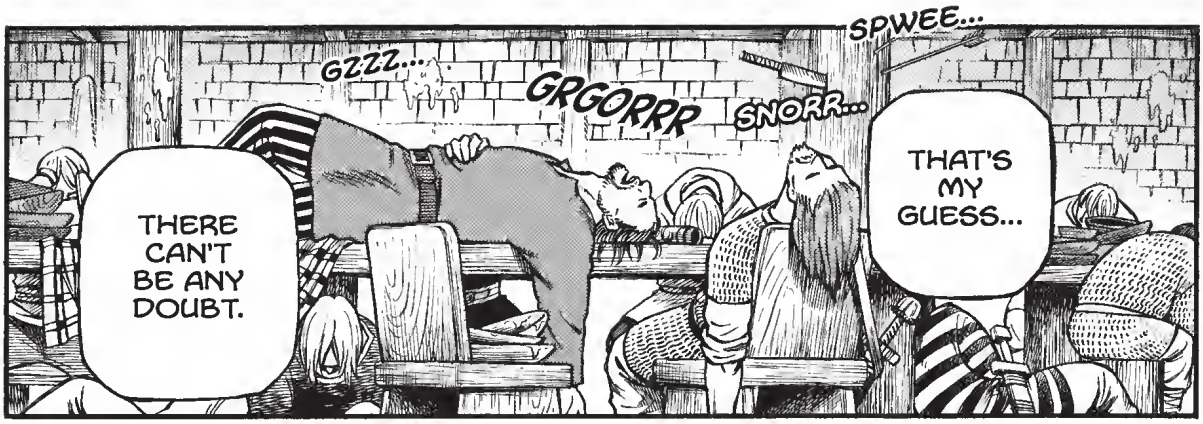
TH...
THAT'S WHAT THE MESSAGE SAYS...

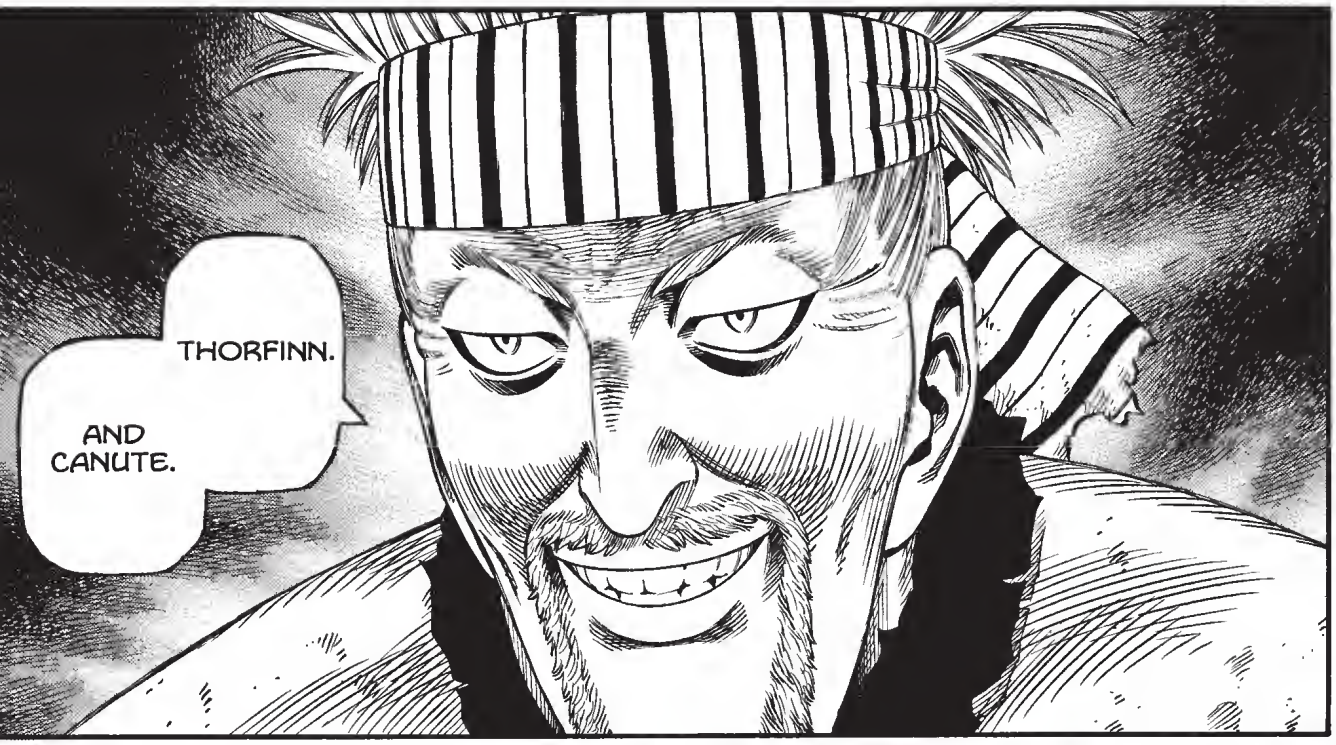
THE ONLY SURVIVOR CLAIMS THEY'RE ONE TO TWO HUNDRED STRONG.


SURELY THE GREAT AND HEROIC CAPTAIN THORKELL...
SO! WE WERE THINKING, WELL...
...MIGHT SEE TO IT THAT THESE VAGABONDS ARE, ERR... VANQUISHED?
TEE-HEE!

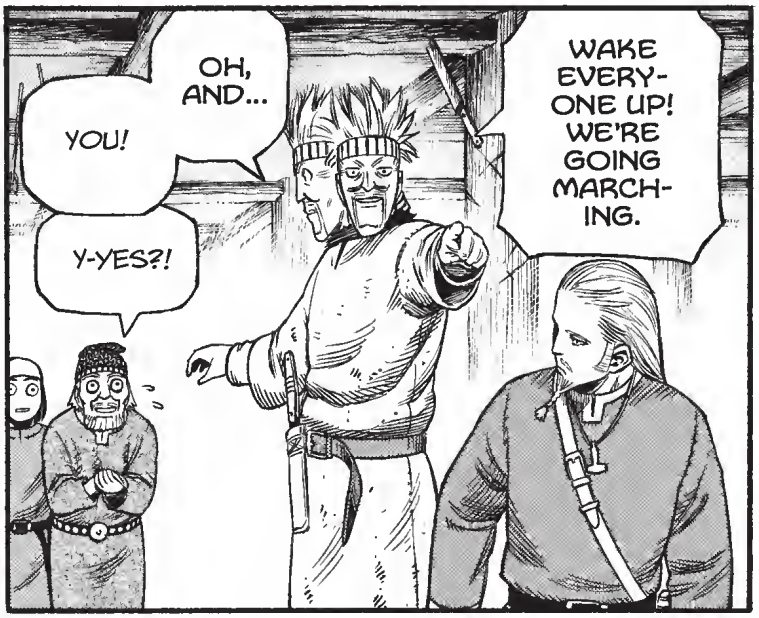

SEEMS CLEAR TO ME...
...WHAT DO YOU THINK?
THERE CAN'T BE MANY DANISH CONTINGENTS OF THAT SIZE ACTING INDEPENDENTLY AT THIS TIME OF YEAR.


HRRR
THEY FEINT GOING BY SEA, THEN MARCH OVER LAND TO GAINS-BOROUGH...
...ONLY TO TAKE TO HIBERNA-TION WHEN THE SNOW TRAPS THEM?

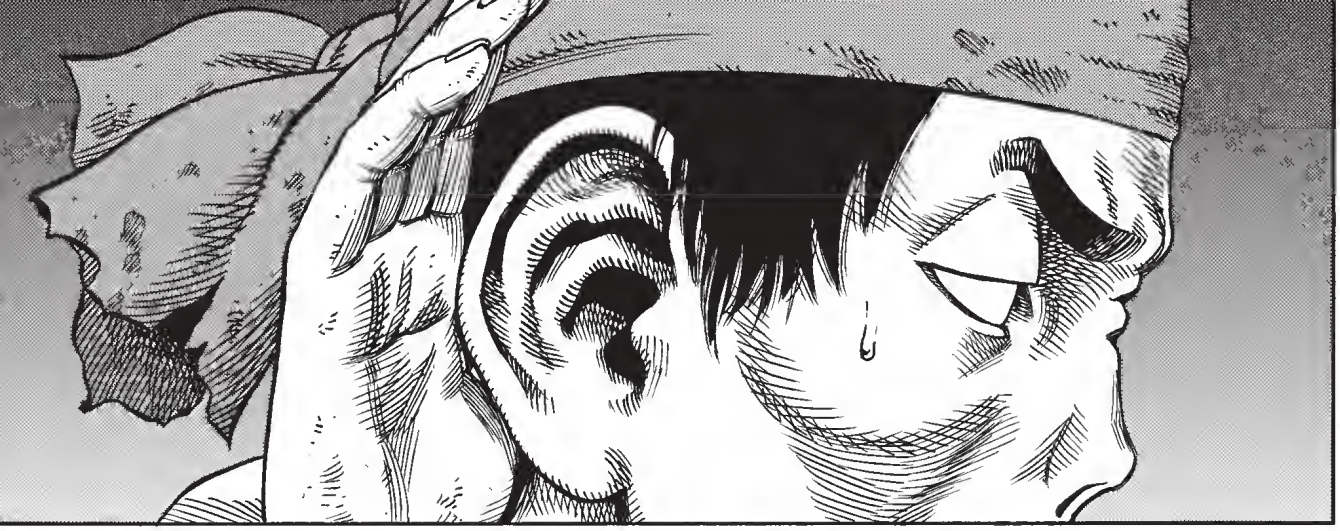

GZZZ...
GRGORRR
SNORR...
SPWEE...
THERE CAN'T BE ANY DOUBT.
THAT'S MY GUESS...


THORFINN.
AND CANUTE.

WE'LL NEED PROVISIONS FOR THE BAND.
FIVE DAYS' WORTH FOR FIVE HUNDRED MEN SHOULD BE ALL WE NEED.
YOU CAN'T BE...
WHA-?!
FIV...


OH, AND...
YOU!
Y-YES?!
WAKE EVERY-ONE UP! WE'RE GOING MARCH-ING.

CHAPTER 29 - END



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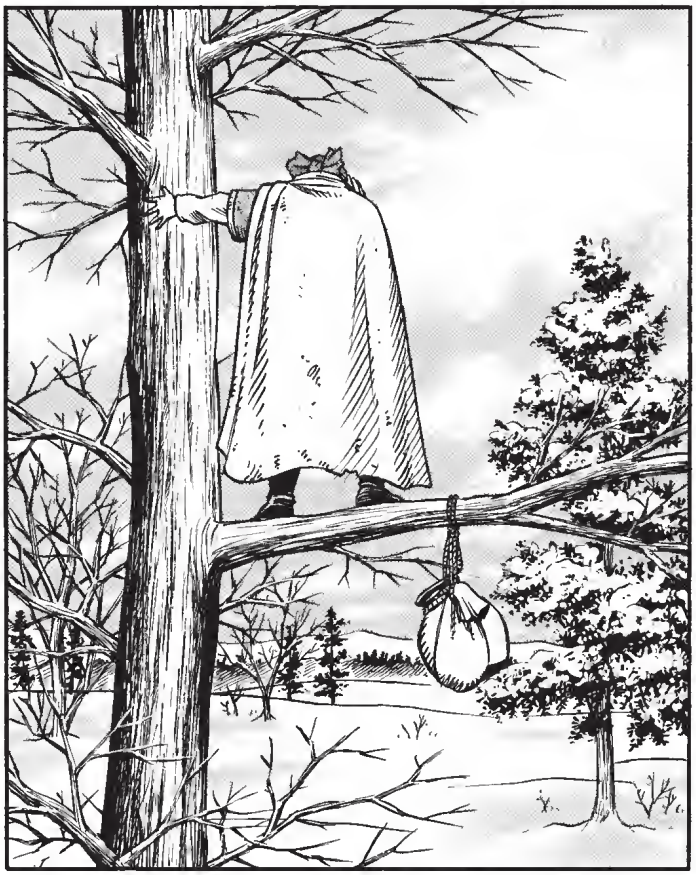
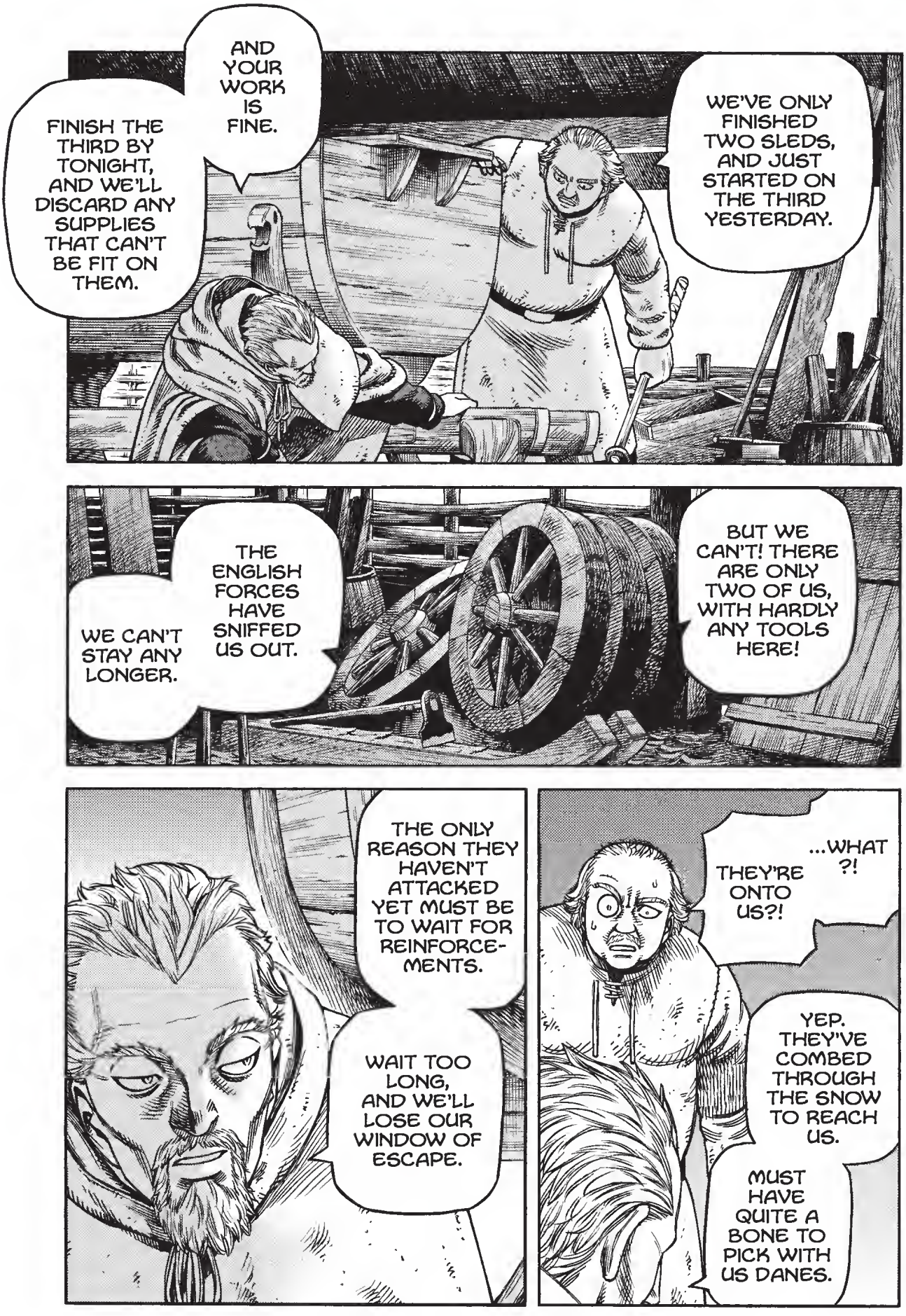


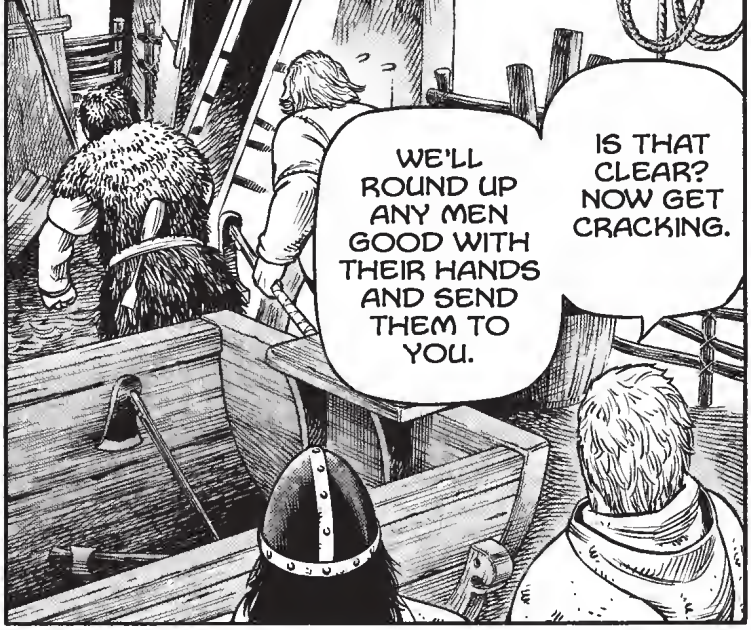
...TSK.

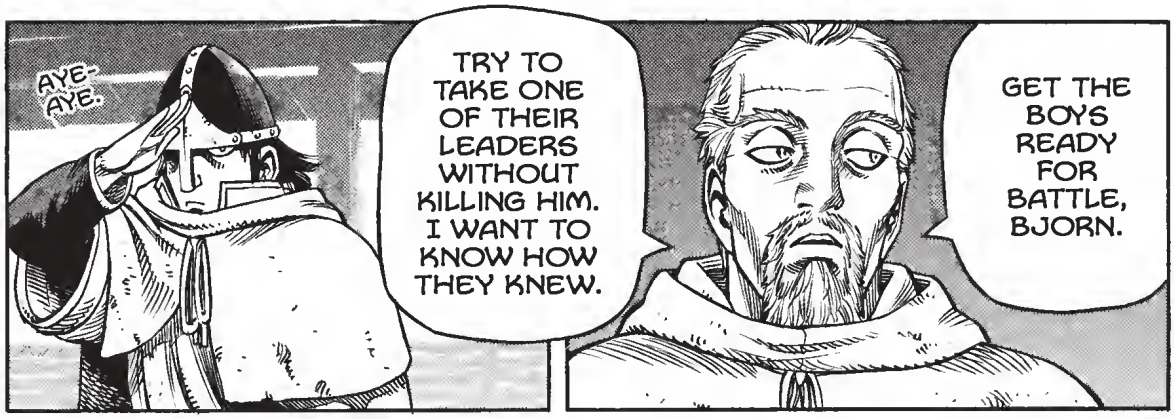
CHAPTER 30:
MASTER AND SERVANT AT THE TABLE

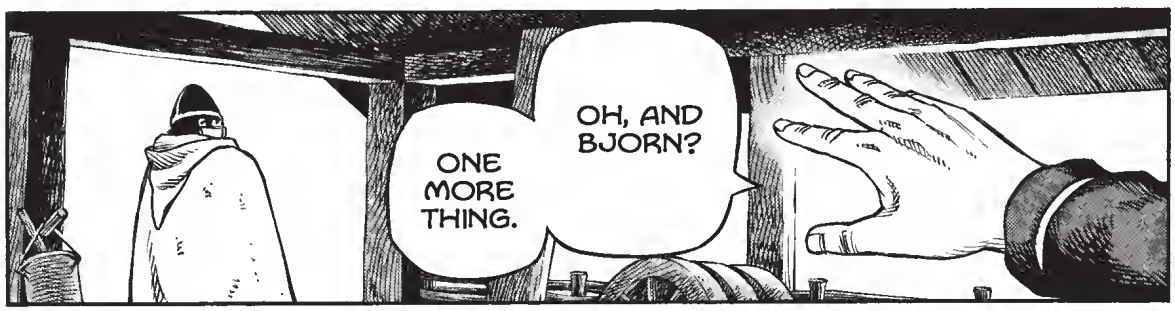
DON'T TURN YOUR HEAD; JUST FOLLOW WITH YOUR EYES.
IN THE EVER-GREEN FOREST BEYOND THE CREEK.
PUFF PUFF
SLUSH SLUSH SLOSH...
SLUSH SLUSH SLUSH...
HOW MANY, EAR?
HARD TO SAY.
FIFTY? A HUN-DRED? MORE...?
THEY'RE FLANKING US ALONG THE WOODS TO THE EAST.
DON'T SEEM LIKE THEY'RE IN ANY RUSH TO CLOSE IN.

NOT SURE.
AH, ALL DONE.
BUT THEY KNOW WE'RE HERE, AND THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.
DID WE TIP OUR HAND SOME-HOW?
THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE SNIFFED US OUT SO FAST.
CHUK
CHUK
CHUK
CHUK
WE'RE LEAVING ?!
TONIGHT? WE CAN'T FINISH IN TIME.

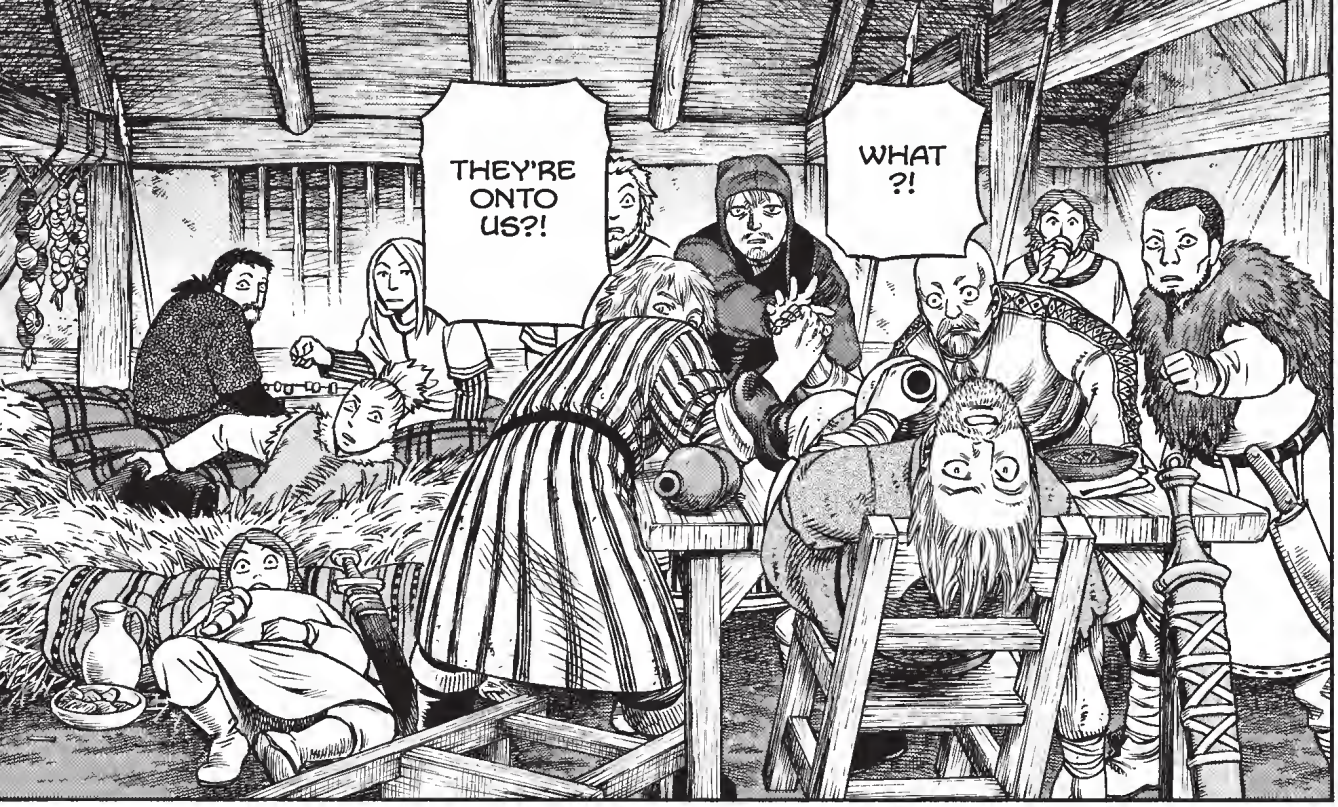

AND YOUR WORK IS FINE.
FINISH THE THIRD BY TONIGHT, AND WE'LL DISCARD ANY SUPPLIES THAT CAN'T BE FIT ON THEM.
WE'VE ONLY FINISHED TWO SLEDS, AND JUST STARTED ON THE THIRD YESTERDAY.
THE ENGLISH FORCES HAVE SNIFFED US OUT.
WE CAN'T STAY ANY LONGER.
BUT WE CAN'T! THERE ARE ONLY TWO OF US, WITH HARDLY ANY TOOLS HERE!
THE ONLY REASON THEY HAVEN'T ATTACKED YET MUST BE TO WAIT FOR REINFORCE-MENTS.
WAIT TOO LONG, AND WE'LL LOSE OUR WINDOW OF ESCAPE.
...WHAT ?!
THEY'RE ONTO US?!
YEP. THEY'VE COMBED THROUGH THE SNOW TO REACH US.
MUST HAVE QUITE A BONE TO PICK WITH US DANES.

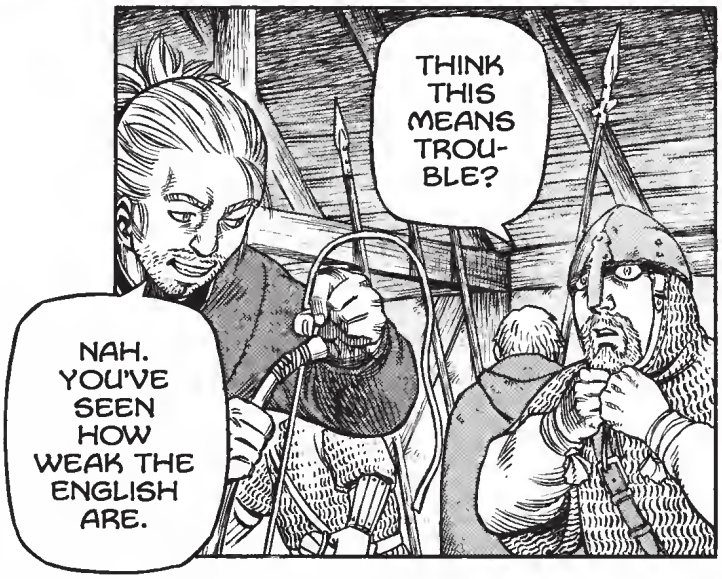

WE'LL ROUND UP ANY MEN GOOD WITH THEIR HANDS AND SEND THEM TO YOU.
IS THAT CLEAR? NOW GET CRACKING.


AYE-AYE.
TRY TO TAKE ONE OF THEIR LEADERS WITHOUT KILLING HIM. I WANT TO KNOW HOW THEY KNEW.
GET THE BOYS READY FOR BATTLE, BJORN.


ONE MORE THING.
OH, AND BJORN?

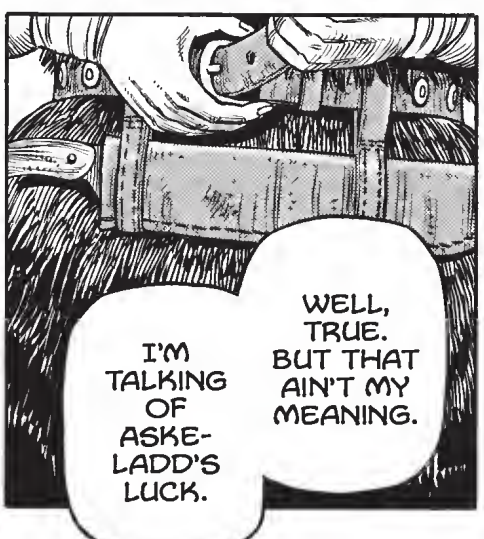
...TO PUT OUR PLAN INTO MOTION.
THIS IS THE PERFECT CHANCE ...

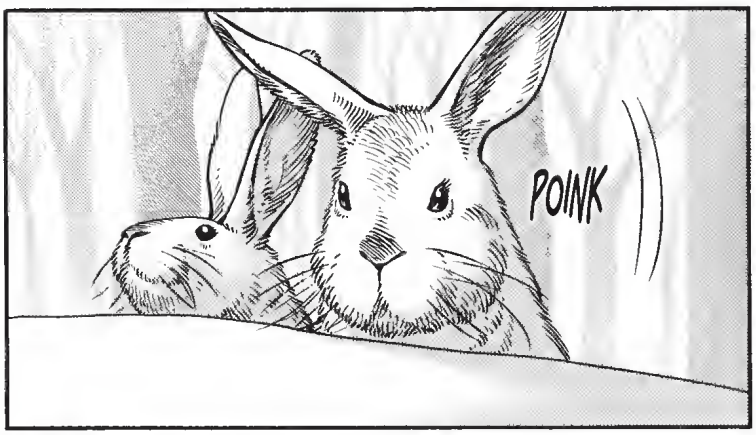

THEY'RE ONTO US?!
WHAT ?!

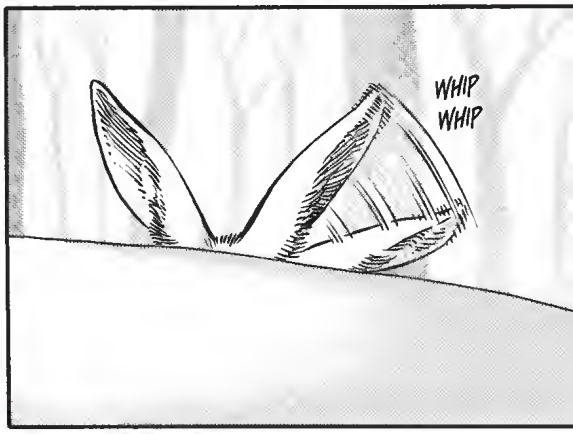

THINK THIS MEANS TROU-BLE?
NAH. YOU'VE SEEN HOW WEAK THE ENGLISH ARE.

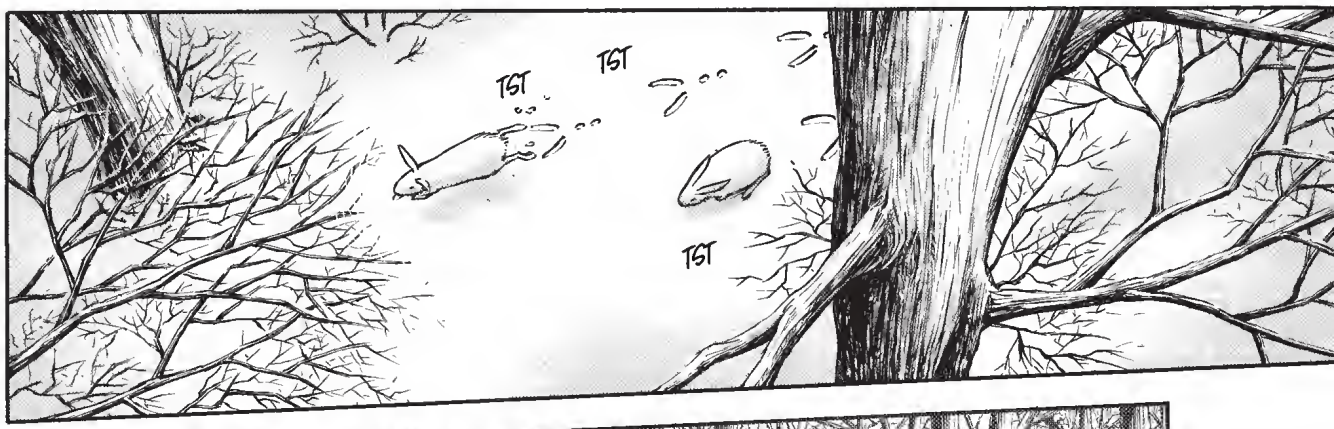
ARE YOU KIDDING? IN THIS SNOW?
YOU SURE IT'S NOT JUST A PACK OF WOLVES?

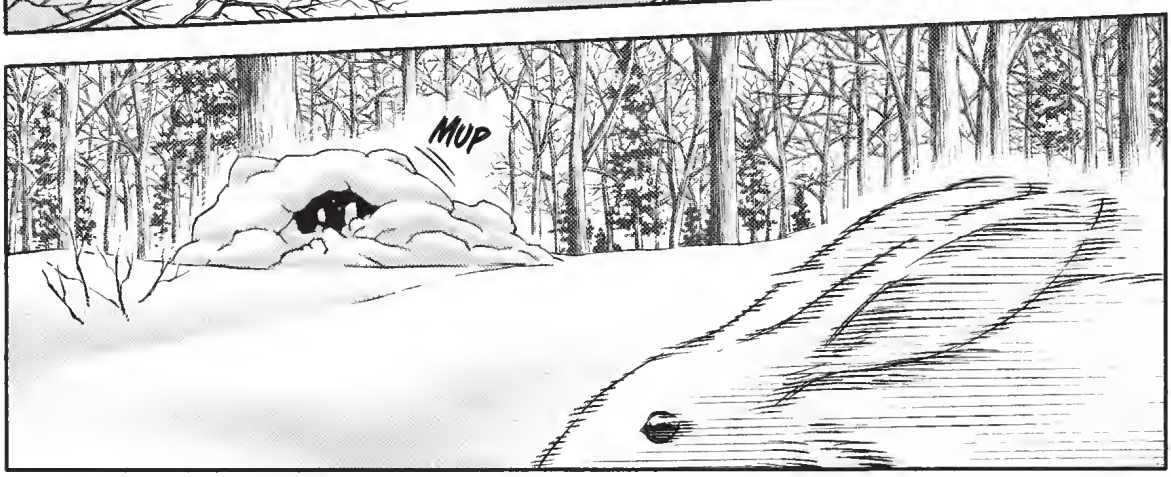
FIRST THE SNOWS, NOW THIS.
I'VE NEVER SEEN HIS PLANS BETRAY HIM IN SUCCESSION LIKE THIS.
SHRK


WELL, TRUE. BUT THAT AIN'T MY MEANING.
I'M TALKING OF ASKE-LADD'S LUCK.

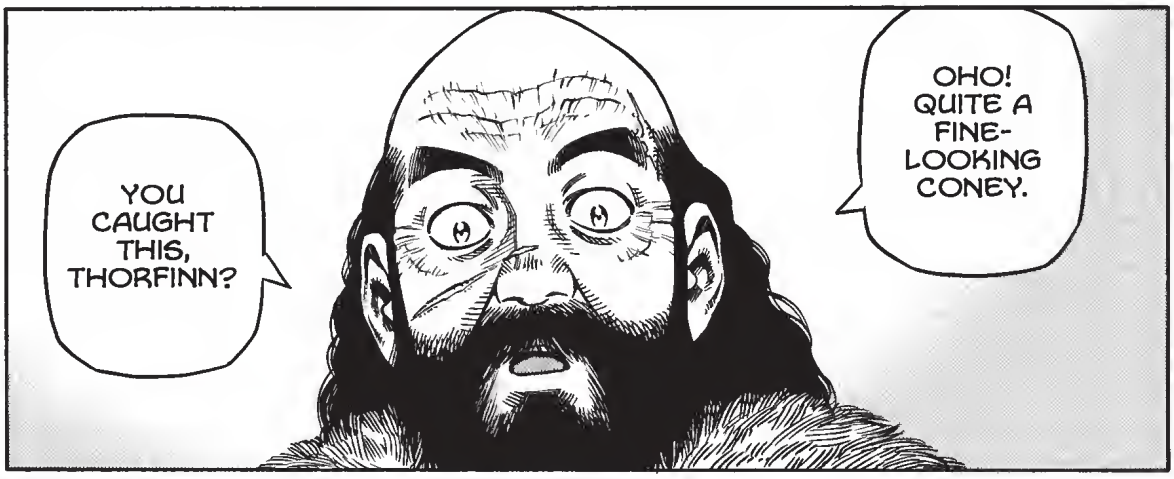

POINK

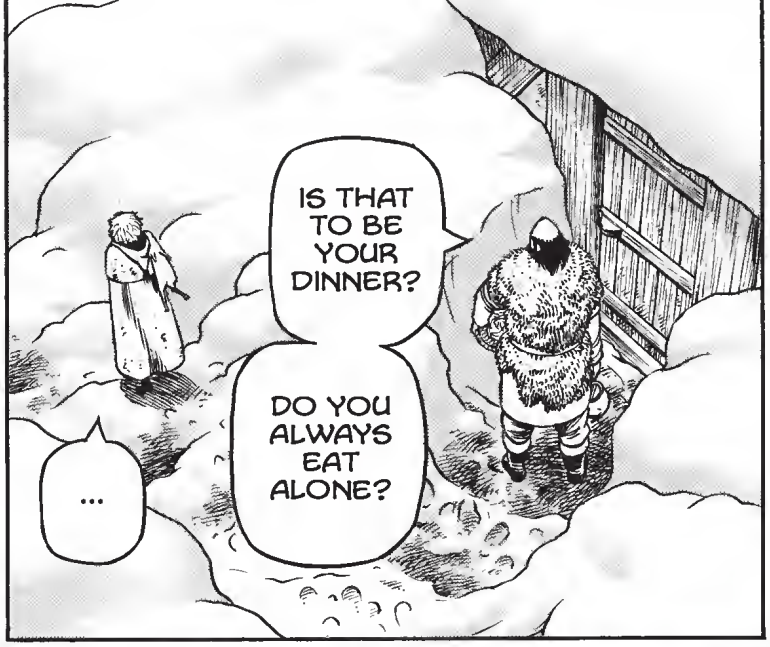

WHIP
WHIP


TST
TST
TST


MUP

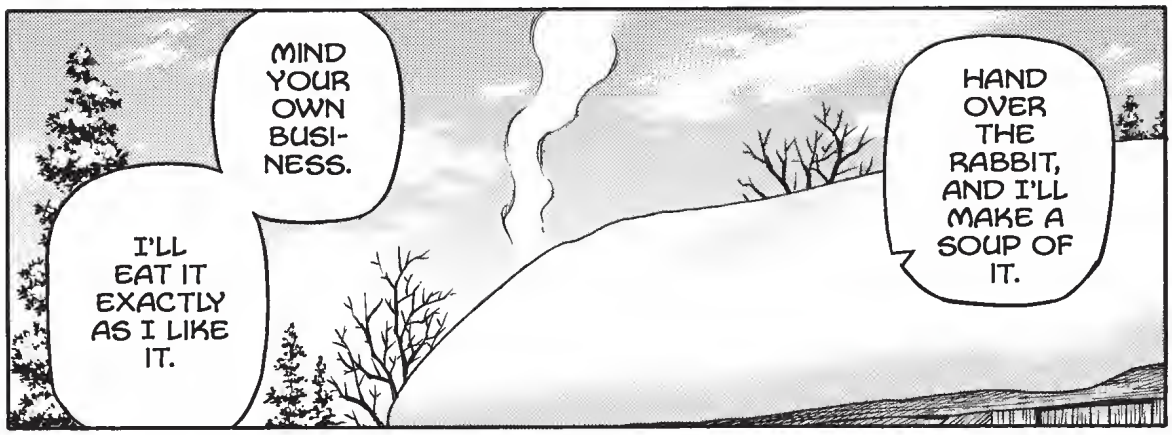
HREEG!
DRSH
SHLUF
SHLUF
SHLUF
MEEP!


YOU CAUGHT THIS, THORFINN?
OHO! QUITE A FINE-LOOKING CONEY.

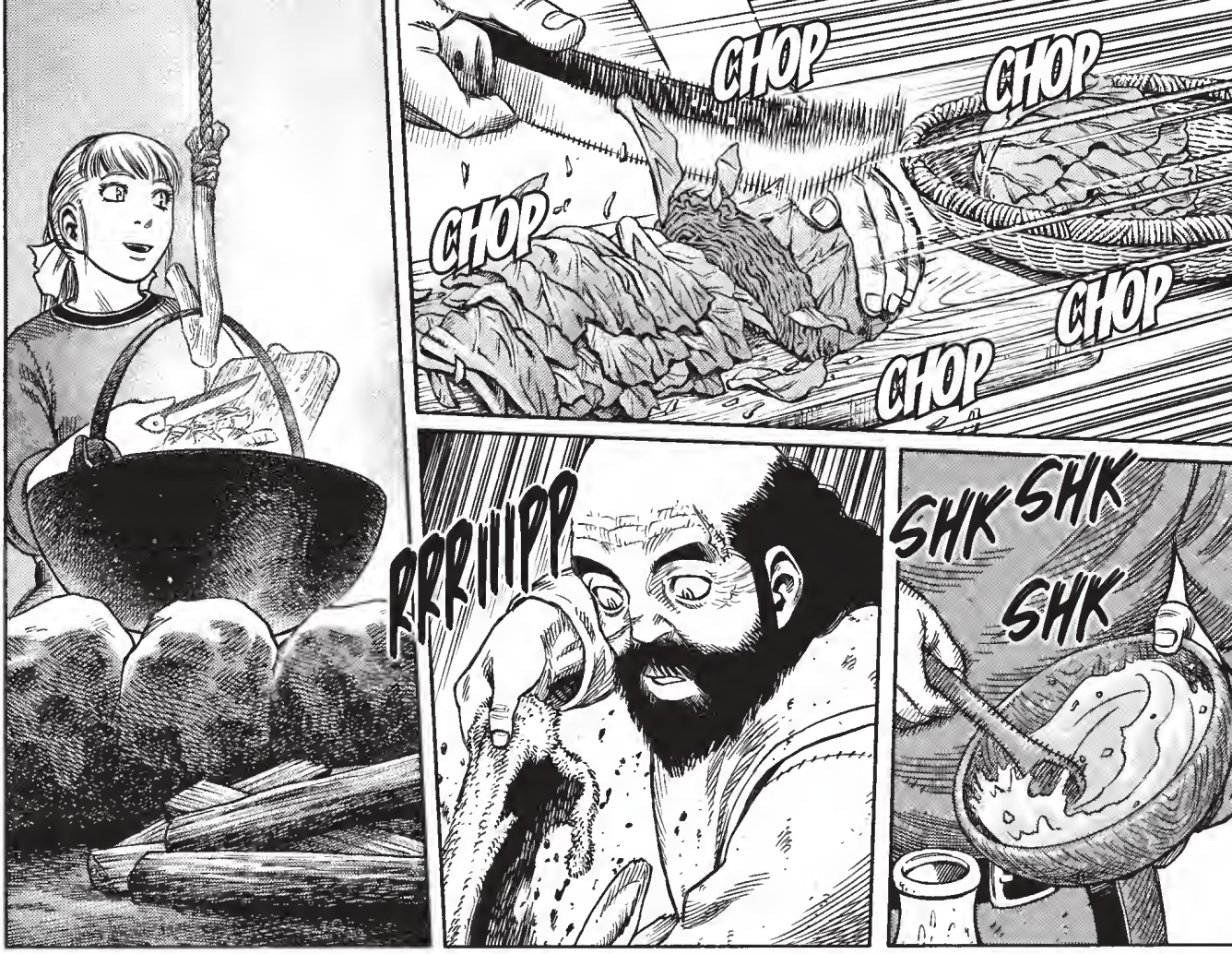

IS THAT TO BE YOUR DINNER?
DO YOU ALWAYS EAT ALONE?
...

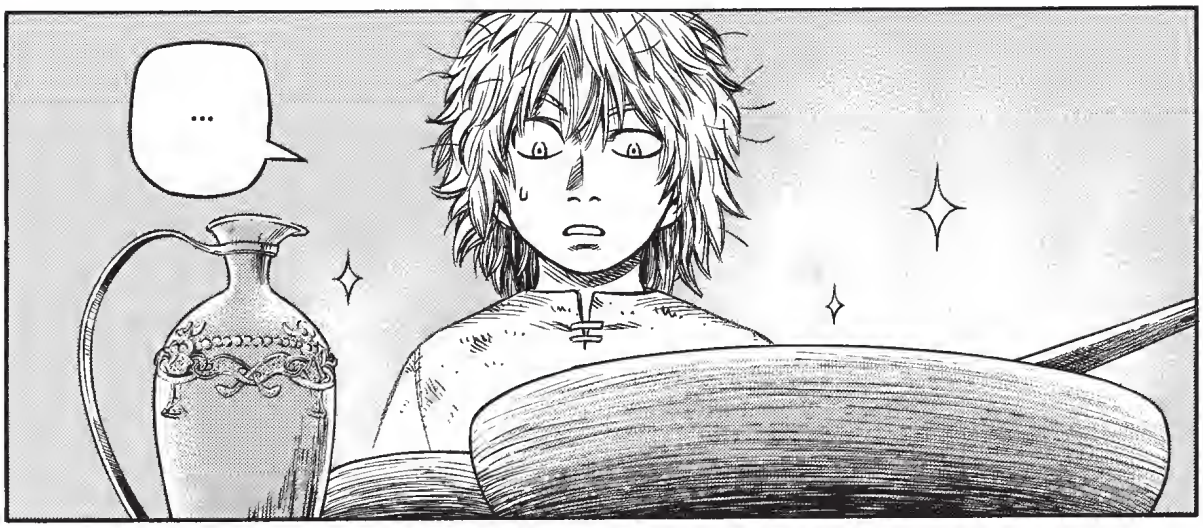
BUZZ OFF.
WHAT IF I WILL?
WILL YOU COOK IT?

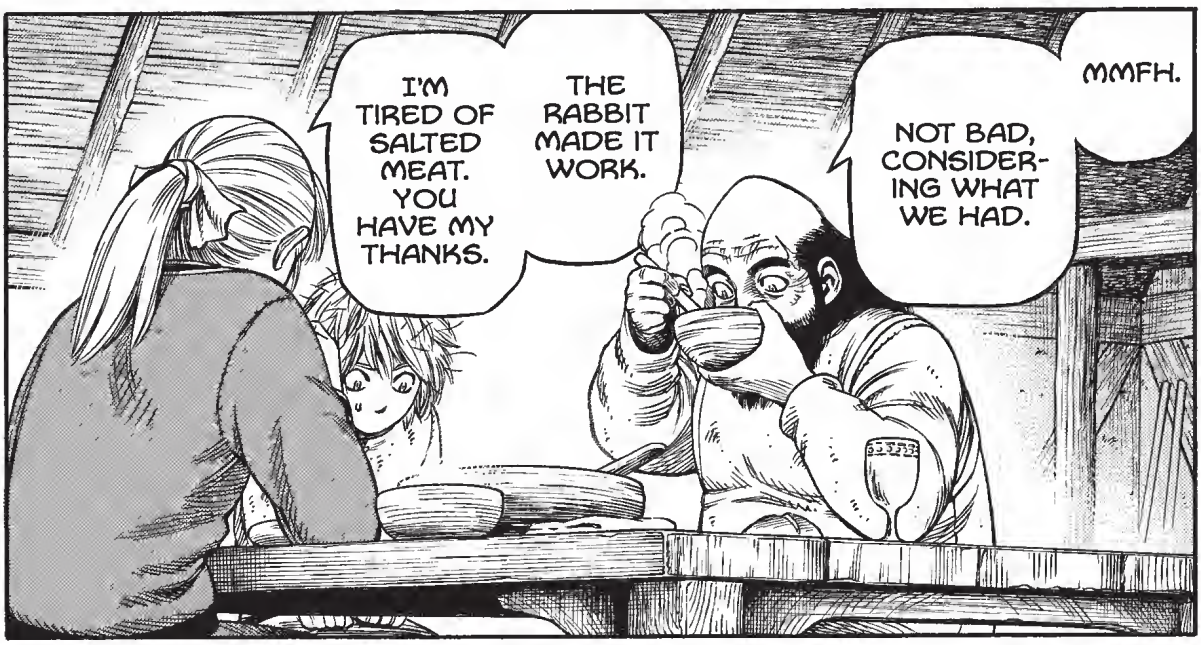
WITHOUT VEGETABLES, YOU'LL GROW TIRED FASTER, ESPECIALLY AT THIS TIME OF YEAR.
THE JUICE OF THE MEAT WILL MAKE THIS WILTED CABBAGE MORE PALATABLE.
A MEAL OF MEAT ALONE ISN'T HEALTHY. STEW IT WITH GREENS.

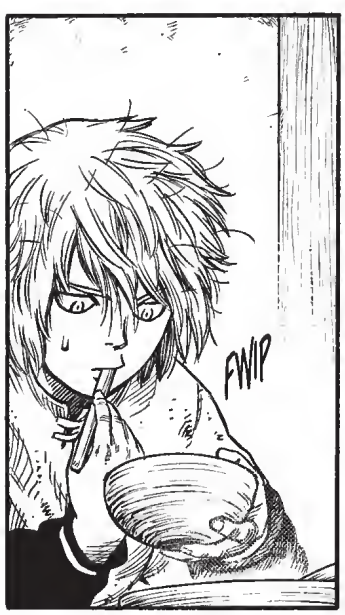

MIND YOUR OWN BUSI-NESS.
I'LL EAT IT EXACTLY AS I LIKE IT.
HAND OVER THE RABBIT, AND I'LL MAKE A SOUP OF IT.

JUST COME HERE, BOY.
YOU'LL NEED TO BORROW SOME-ONE'S FIRE ANYWAY, WON'T YOU?
SO COME INSIDE AND USE OURS.
HIGH-NESS!
WE HAVE BEANS, CABBAGE AND A HARE.
A HARE?
THORFINN CAUGHT IT.
WE'LL PUT IT IN THE SOUP.
WELL DONE.
BLEED AND SKIN IT SO WE CAN WASH THE MEAT.


CHOP
CHOP
CHOP
CHOP
CHOP
RRRIIIPP
SHK SHK
SHK

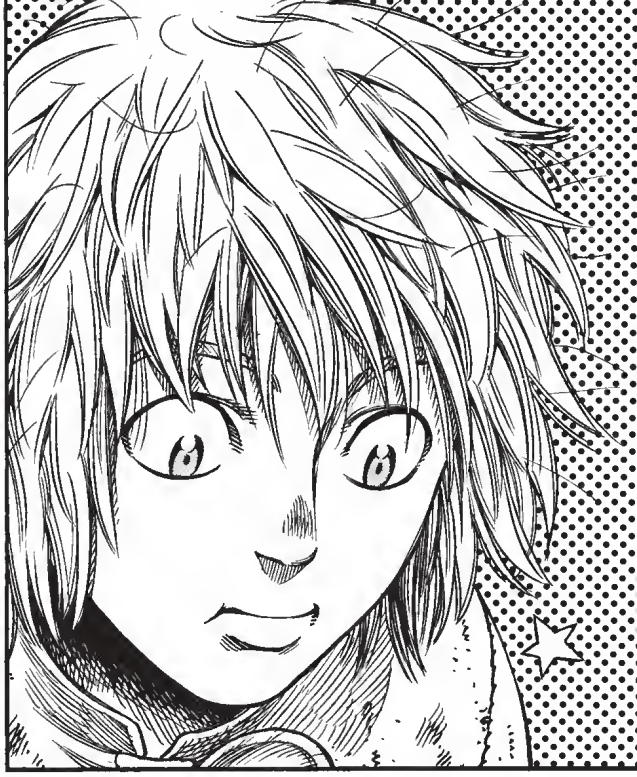

...

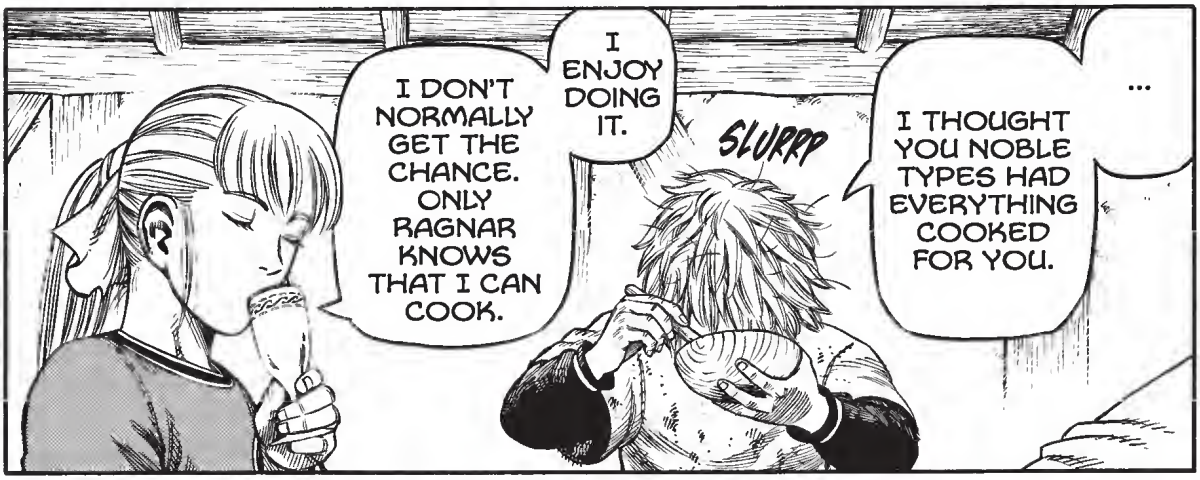

I'M TIRED OF SALTED MEAT. YOU HAVE MY THANKS.
THE RABBIT MADE IT WORK.
NOT BAD, CONSIDERING WHAT WE HAD.
MMFH.

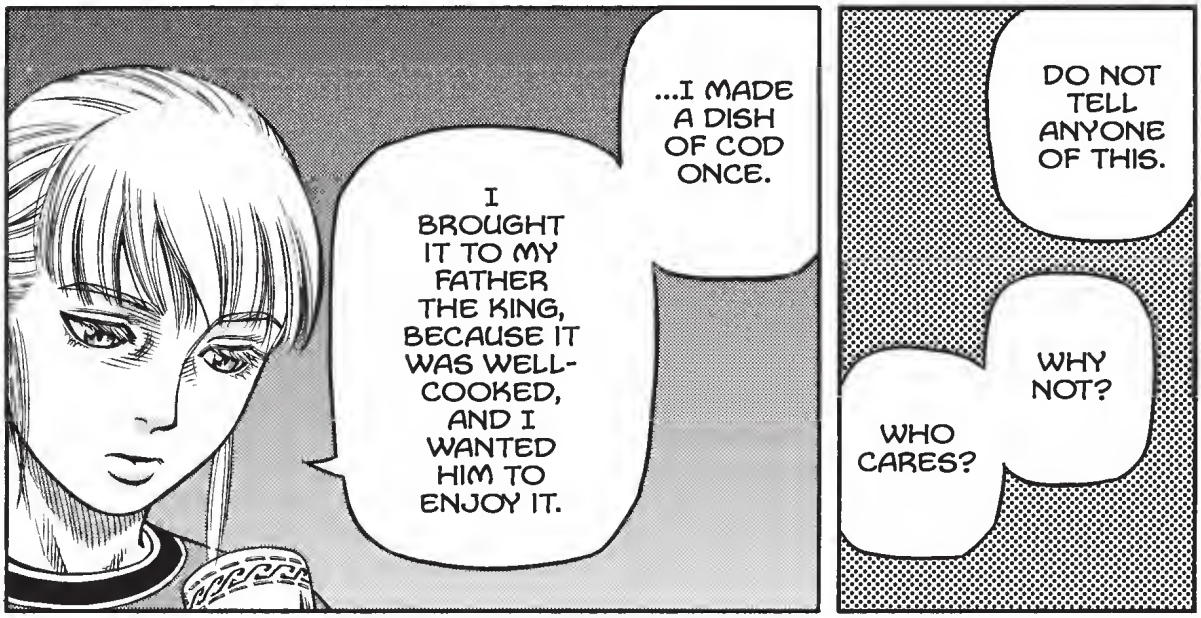

FWIP

EAT UP. YOU CAUGHT THE RABBIT.
WHAT'S WRONG?

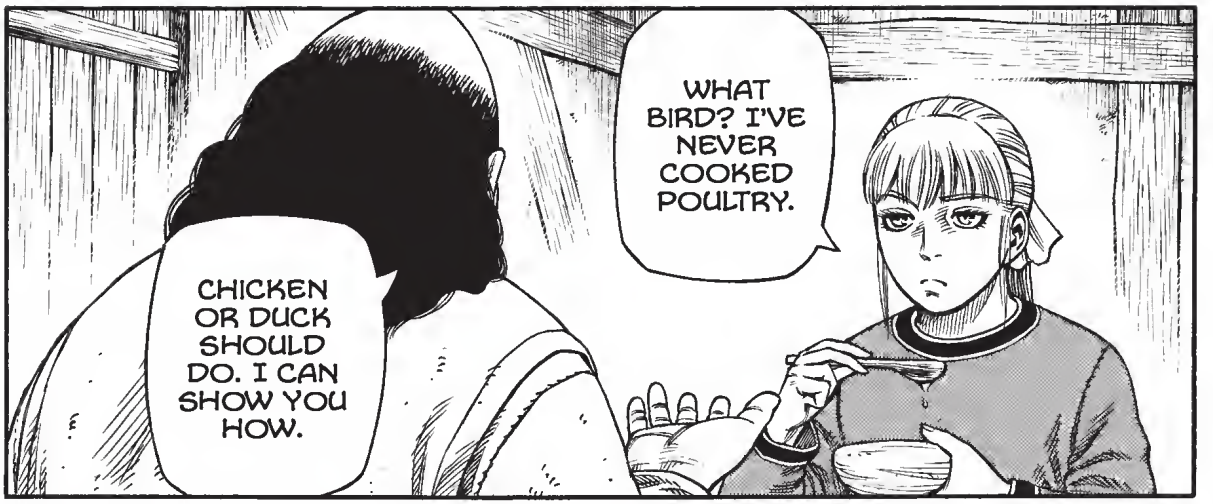
HA HA HA
FIND US A DEER NEXT, AND THEN WE'LL REALLY HAVE A MEAL!
GOOD, ISN'T IT?

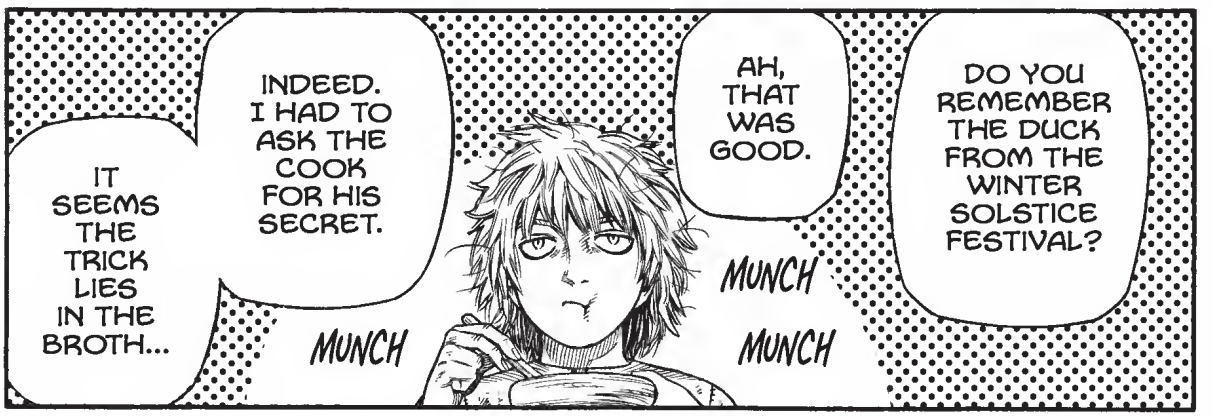


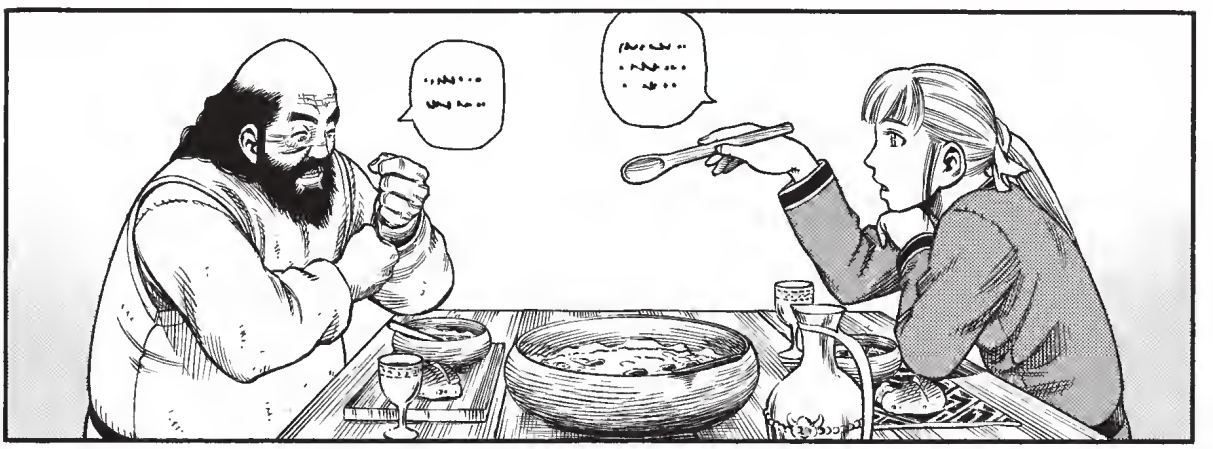

I DON'T NORMALLY GET THE CHANCE. ONLY RAGNAR KNOWS THAT I CAN COOK.
I ENJOY DOING IT.
SLURRP
...
I THOUGHT YOU NOBLE TYPES HAD EVERYTHING COOKED FOR YOU.

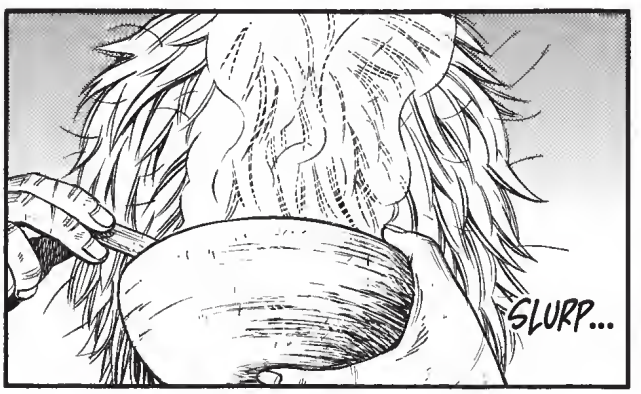

I BROUGHT IT TO MY FATHER THE KING, BECAUSE IT WAS WELL-COOKED, AND I WANTED HIM TO ENJOY IT.
...I MADE A DISH OF COD ONCE.
DO NOT TELL ANYONE OF THIS.
WHY NOT?
WHO CARES?

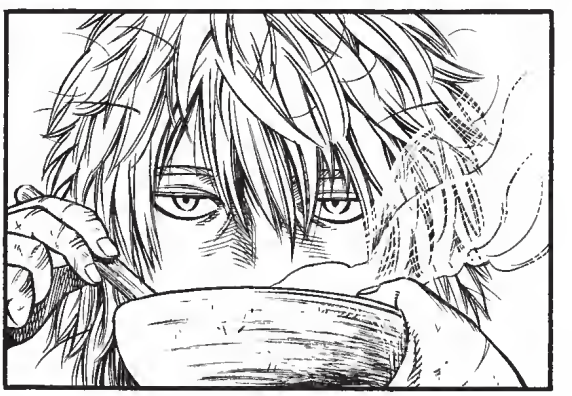
BUT HIS MAJESTY DID NOT EAT IT. HE FLEW INTO A RAGE, AND TOLD ME...
"NO SON OF A KING PRETENDS TO DO A SLAVE'S WORK."
...
A PRINCE DOES NOT NEED THAT SKILL.
SINCE THEN, I HAVE OFFICIALLY NEVER COOKED.
HIS MAJESTY IS NOT EN-AMORED OF COD, EITHER.
WHEN THE WAR IS OVER, WE SHALL PRESENT HIM WITH A GOOD FOWL. I'M CERTAIN HE WILL LOVE IT.
AT THE TIME, OF COURSE...
...THIS WAR WAS JUST BEGINNING. NO DOUBT HIS MAJESTY WAS TAXED WITH MANAGING IT.


WHAT BIRD? I'VE NEVER COOKED POULTRY.
CHICKEN OR DUCK SHOULD DO. I CAN SHOW YOU HOW.

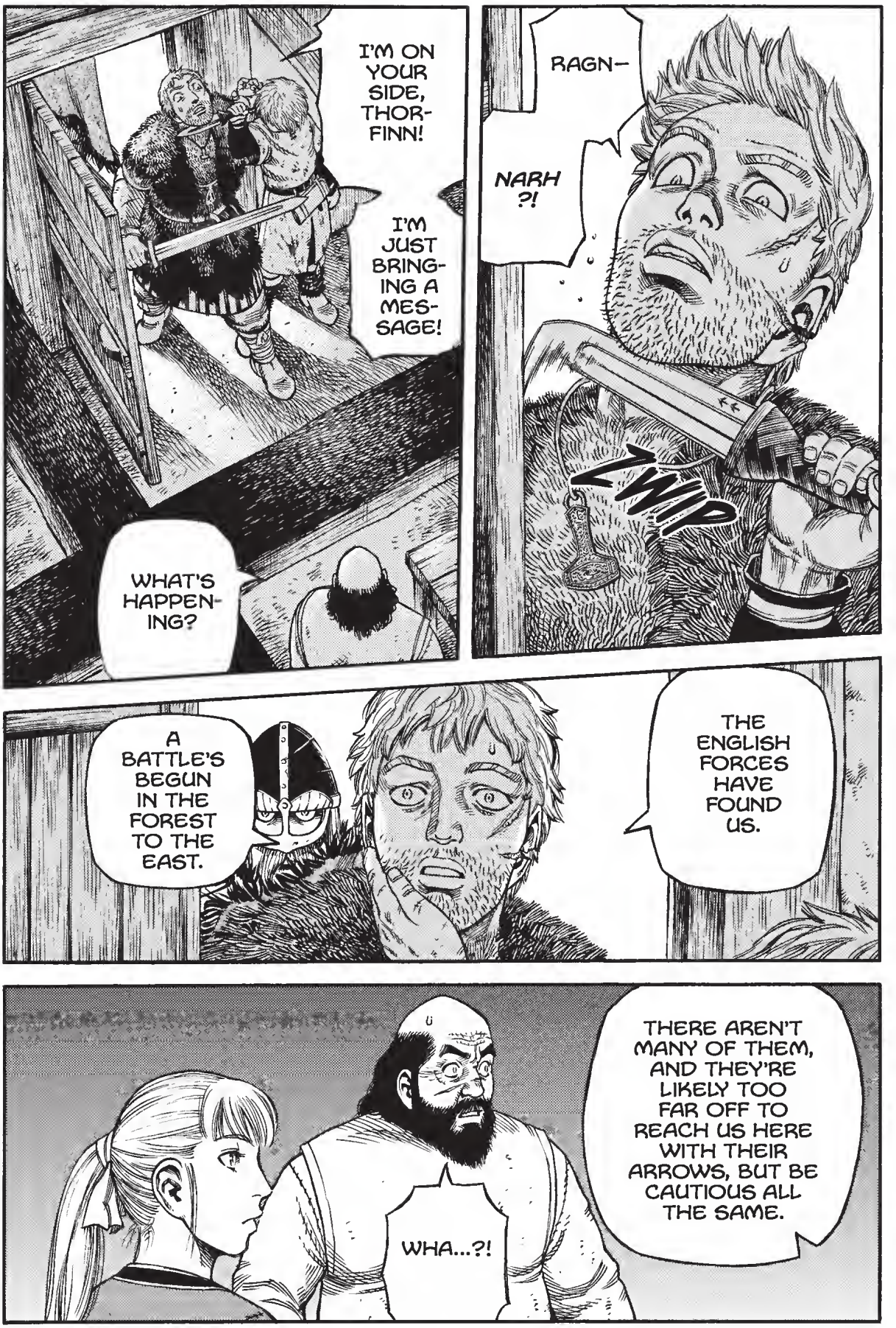

DO YOU REMEMBER THE DUCK FROM THE WINTER SOLSTICE FESTIVAL?
AH, THAT WAS GOOD.
MUNCH
MUNCH
INDEED. I HAD TO ASK THE COOK FOR HIS SECRET.
IT SEEMS THE TRICK LIES IN THE BROTH...
MUNCH




SLURP...

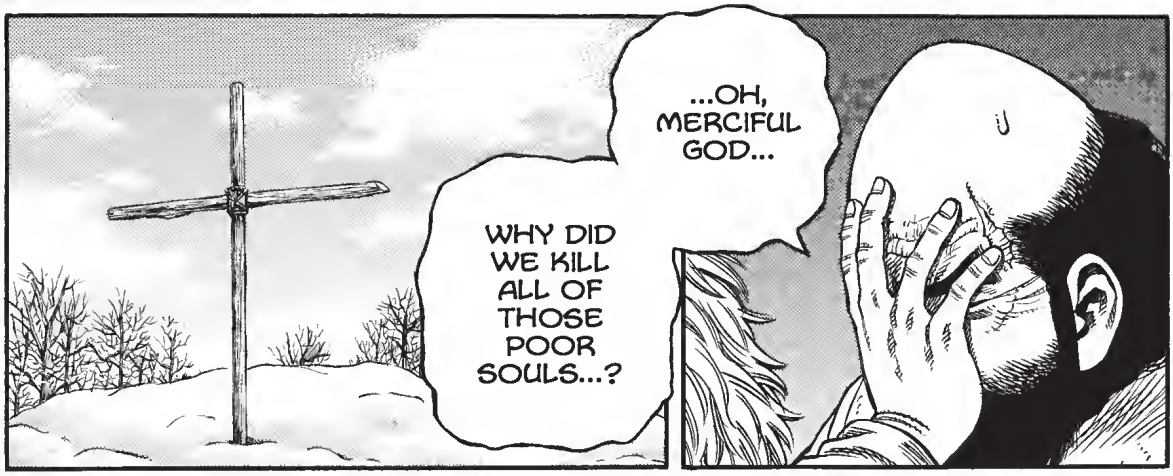


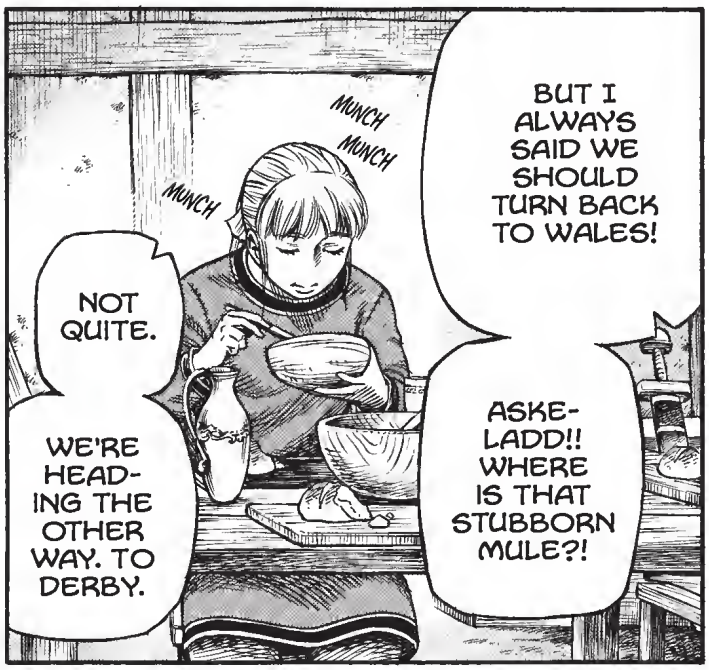
RAAAAAH
AAAH...
?
WHAT IS IT?
SHRRK
!
SHKK
WHAM

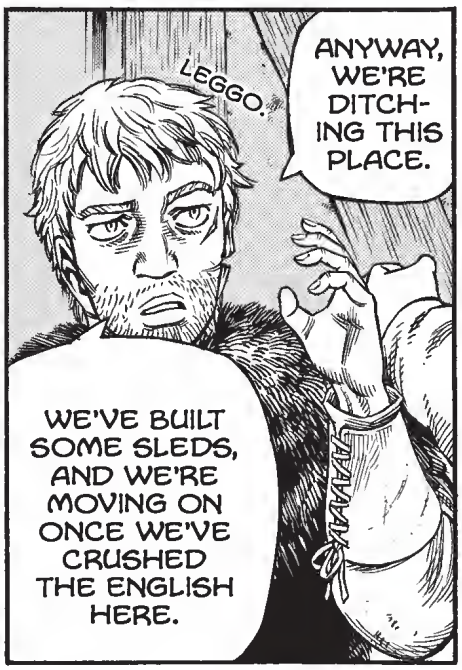

I'M ON YOUR SIDE, THORFINN!
I'M JUST BRINGING A MESSAGE!
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
RAGN—
NARH?!
ZWIP
THE ENGLISH FORCES HAVE FOUND US.
A BATTLE'S BEGUN IN THE FOREST TO THE EAST.
THERE AREN'T MANY OF THEM, AND THEY'RE LIKELY TOO FAR OFF TO REACH US HERE WITH THEIR ARROWS, BUT BE CAUTIOUS ALL THE SAME.
WHA...?!

BAM BAM
BABABAM
CLAK
FOR-WARD, MEN!!
CLAK
CLAK
CLAKK
GLEAH!
CACLAK
CLAK
KAKLACK
I WANT TO FEAST ON ENGLISH PIG FOR SUPPER TONIGHT!!
RAAHHHH

DON'T ASK ME!
OW OW!
HOW CAN THIS BE?! WE'VE ONLY BEEN HIDING HERE FOR TEN DAYS!! HOW DID THEY KNOW?!
WE'RE ALL DISAPPOINTED! WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE SOME OF OUR PLUNDER BEHIND JUST TO ESCAPE!


...OH, MERCIFUL GOD...
WHY DID WE KILL ALL OF THOSE POOR SOULS...?


MUNCH
MUNCH
MUNCH
BUT I ALWAYS SAID WE SHOULD TURN BACK TO WALES!
NOT QUITE.
ASKE-LADD!! WHERE IS THAT STUBBORN MULE?!
WE'RE HEAD-ING THE OTHER WAY. TO DERBY.

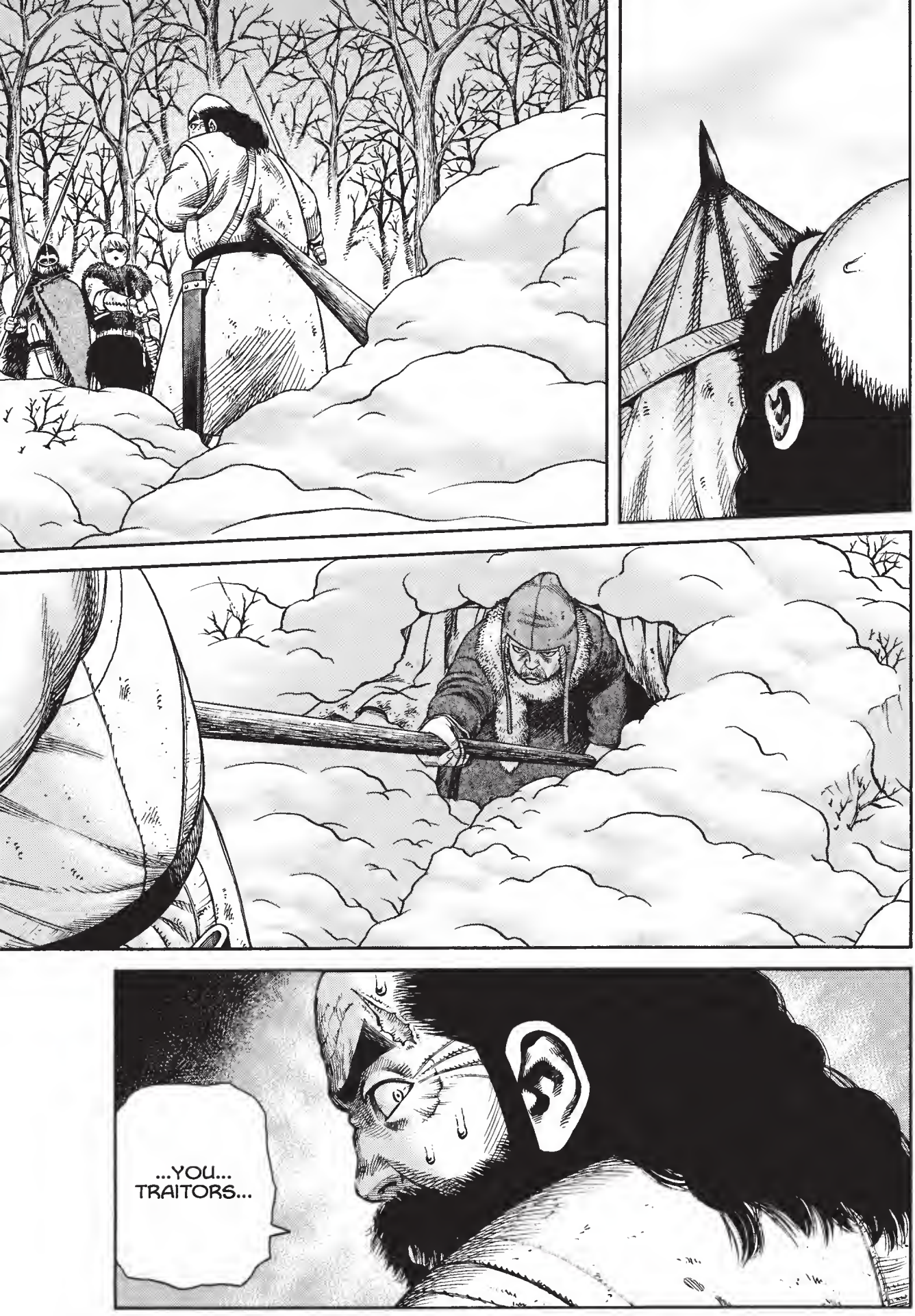

ANYWAY, WE'RE DITCH-ING THIS PLACE.
LEGGO.
AAAAAA
WE'VE BUILT SOME SLEDS, AND WE'RE MOVING ON ONCE WE'VE CRUSHED THE ENGLISH HERE.

...AFTER ALL OF THIS...
...HE WANTS TO GO DEEPER INTO ENEMY LAND?!
RAHH
BRING ME ASKE-LADD!! AT ONCE!!
CAN'T, MY LORD. HE'S COMMANDING THE MEN IN BATTLE.
FSHHHH...
WANT ME TO SHOW YOU THE WAY?
BUT IF YOUR BUSINESS IS THAT URGENT, I'M SURE YOU CAN SEEK HIM OUT YOURSELF.

RAHHH
NOT THE SLIGHTEST *SHRED* OF COURTESY!!
WELL, IT'S CLEAR THAT HIS MEN HAVE LEARNED BY EXAMPLE!!
HE'S DEFIED ME AT EVERY TURN!!
AND LOOK WHERE IT'S GOTTEN US!!
I'VE NEVER SEEN EYE-TO-EYE WITH HIM!
MY BLADE WILL TEACH HIM A DEAR LESSON ABOUT HIS IGNORANCE TODAY, BY GOD!!
HARRUMPH
HMPH FRUMF
WHAT PROPER NORSE WARRIOR CAN'T SEE THAT HIS LUCK'S RUN OUT?! IT'S LAUGHABLE!!
SHUK
SHUK
SHUK
HE NEVER SHUTS UP, DOES HE?

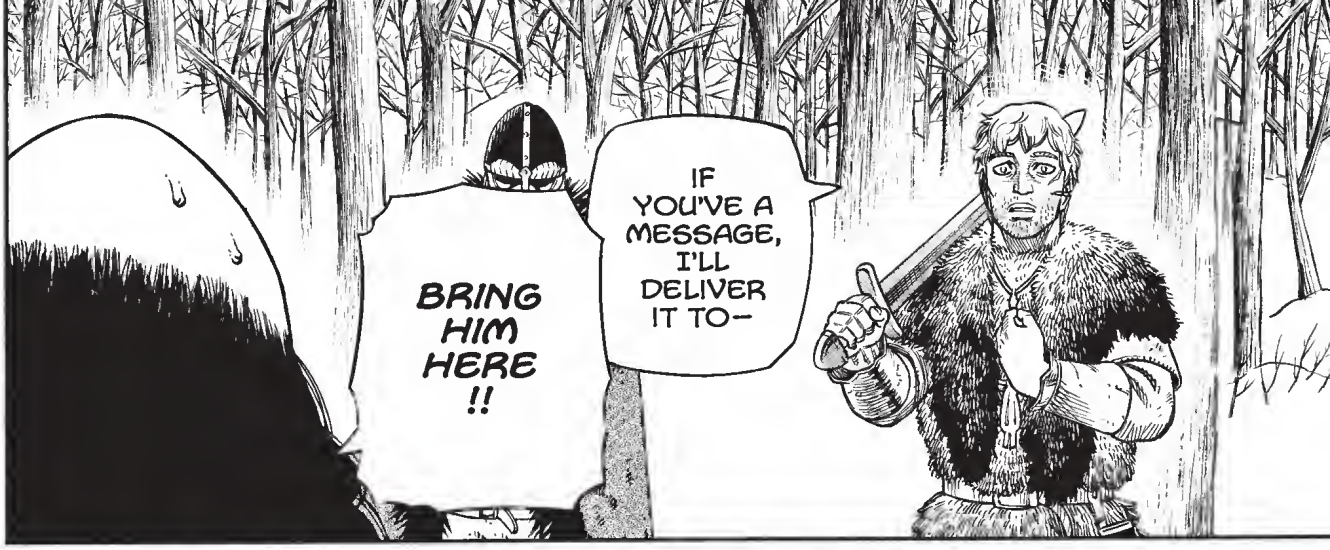
HEY.
HEY!
THE VOICES ARE COMING FROM THAT DIRECTION. CAN'T YOU HEAR THEM?
AAAHH...
IF ONLY WE'D USED THOSE BOATS WHEN WE HAD THEM...
...
WHAT, DID YOU JUST NOTICE?
BY THE GODS, YOU'RE DENSE.
WHAT ARE YOU—
WHAT?!

SKRRK


...YOU...
TRAITORS...

ASKELADD'S ORDERS.
SORRY, CONE-HEAD.
SHING
ZUURK
AAHHH

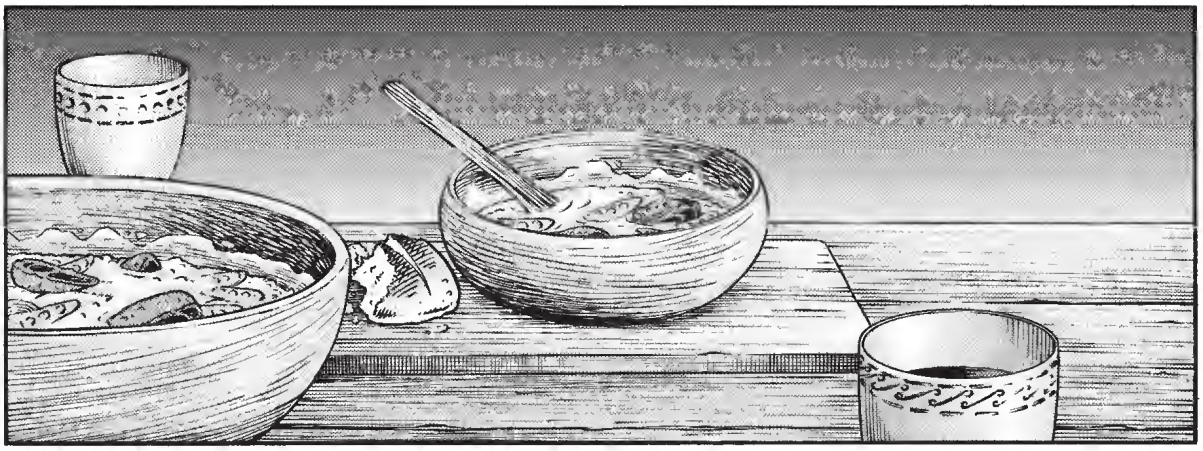
...
FFH
FFH
FFH
STRUG-GLING WILL ONLY MAKE IT MORE PAINFUL.
BUT THERE'S NO SAVING YOU WITH THAT SPEAR THROUGH YOUR GUTS.
WE DON'T MIND FINISH-ING THE FIGHT...
WANT TO GO ON?
BRING ASKELADD HERE...
I MUST SPEAK WITH HIM...

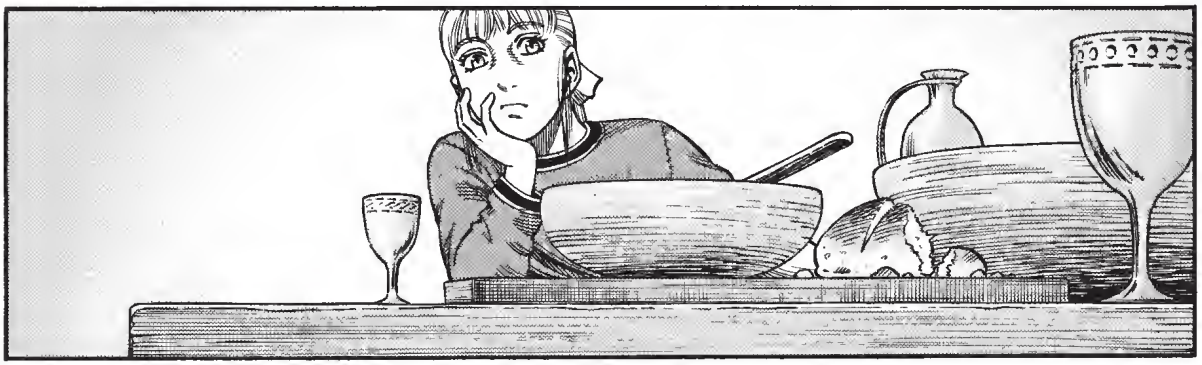

BRING HIM HERE !!
IF YOU'VE A MESSAGE, I'LL DELIVER IT TO–

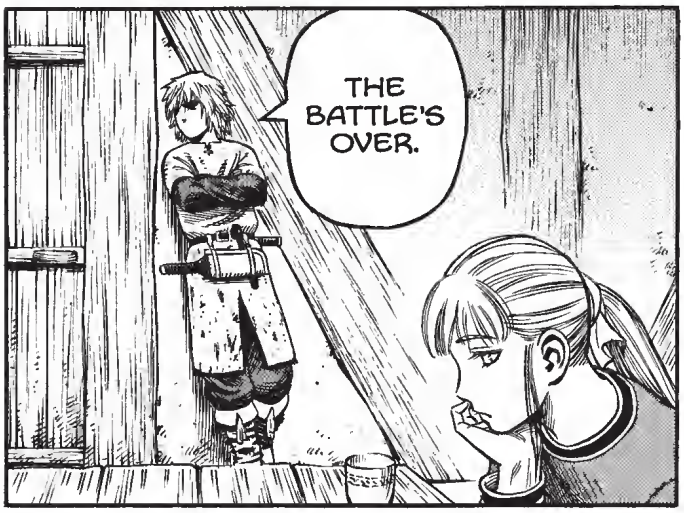
NOW !!
IT REGARDS HIS HIGHNESS THE PRINCE! I MUST TELL HIM DIRECTLY!

I WILL HEAR YOUR FINAL WORDS...
...LORD RAGNAR.

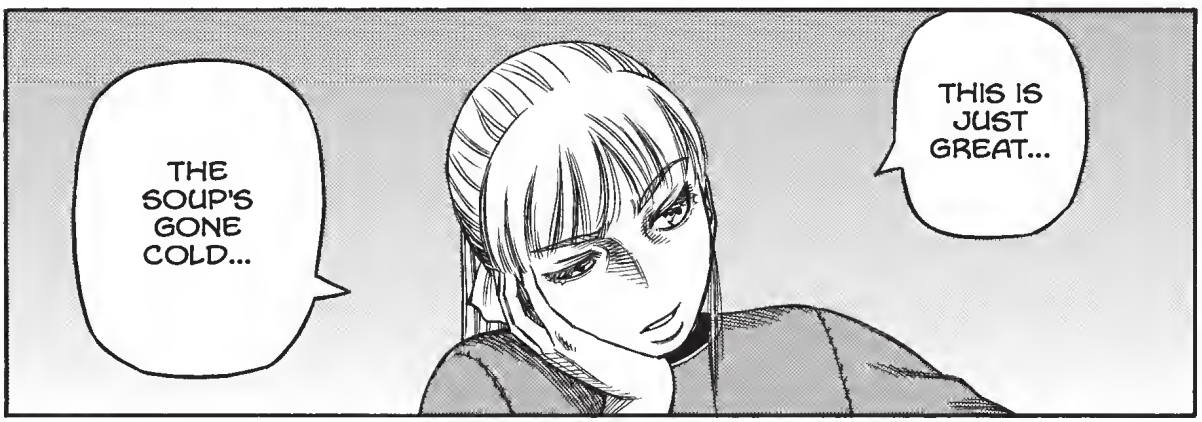
THEY WOULD SEEM TO BE OF IMPORT.
ZRSH
WON'T TAKE LONG.
THEY WERE MOSTLY FARMERS. I'VE LEFT THEM TO BJORN.
WHAT ABOUT THE BATTLE?
...YES.
WOULD YOU RATHER SPEAK IN PRIVATE, LORD RAGNAR?

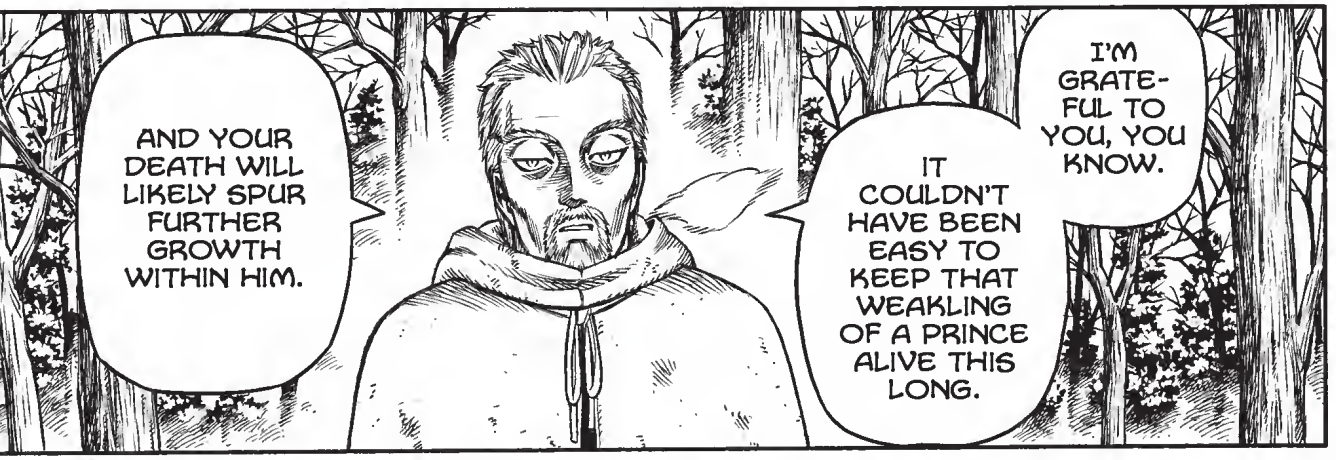


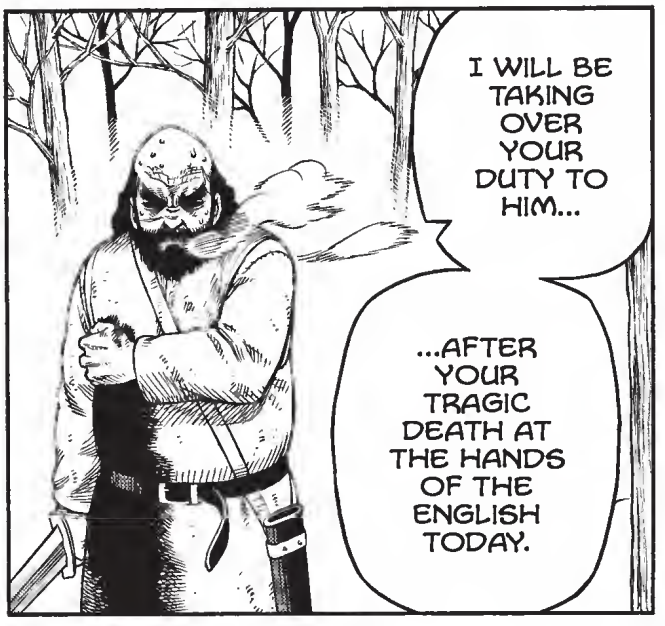



THE BATTLE'S OVER.

...
NO MORE VOICES.


THE SOUP'S GONE COLD...
THIS IS JUST GREAT...

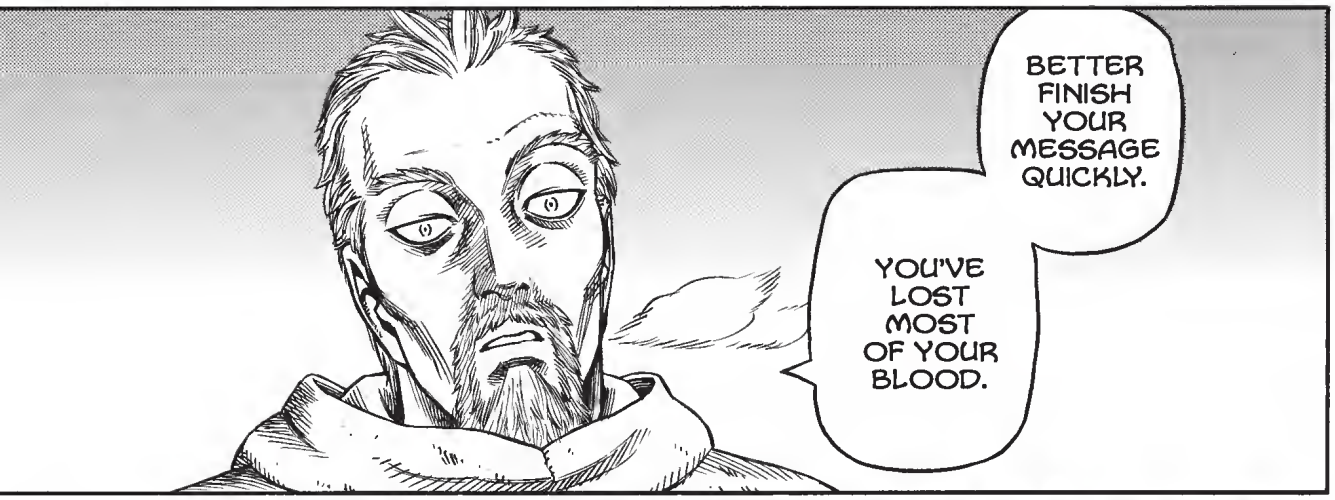

I'M GRATE-FUL TO YOU, YOU KNOW.
IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN EASY TO KEEP THAT WEAKLING OF A PRINCE ALIVE THIS LONG.
AND YOUR DEATH WILL LIKELY SPUR FURTHER GROWTH WITHIN HIM.


I WILL BE TAKING OVER YOUR DUTY TO HIM...
...AFTER YOUR TRAGIC DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THE ENGLISH TODAY.

...
SWEAR TO YOUR GODS...

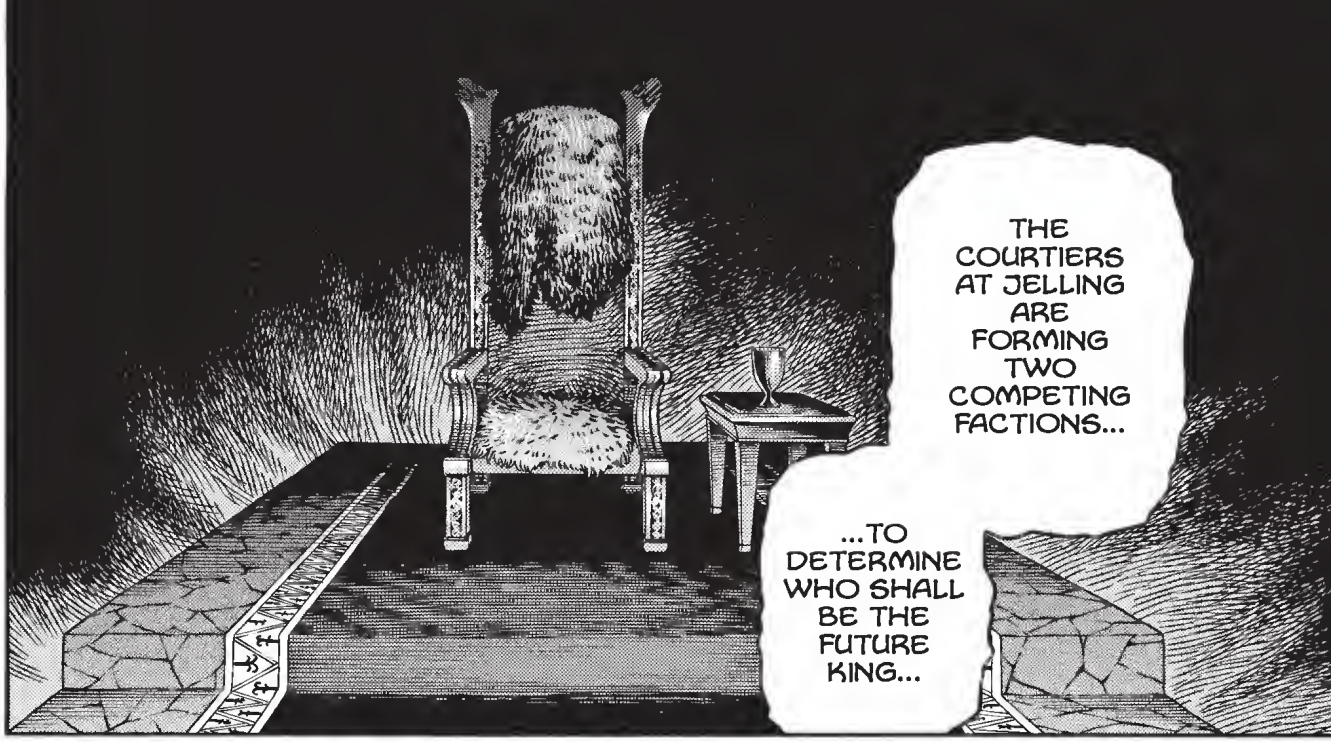
THAT YOU WILL CARRY ON MY DUTY TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY...
...AND PROTECT PRINCE CANUTE ABOVE ALL ELSE...
BLUP...
IN THE NAME OF ODIN...
...I WILL DO ALL THAT IS WITHIN MY POWER TO PROTECT PRINCE CANUTE...
...AND ENSURE THAT THE DEATH OF THE WARRIOR RAGNAR WAS NOT IN VAIN.
WILL THAT DO?

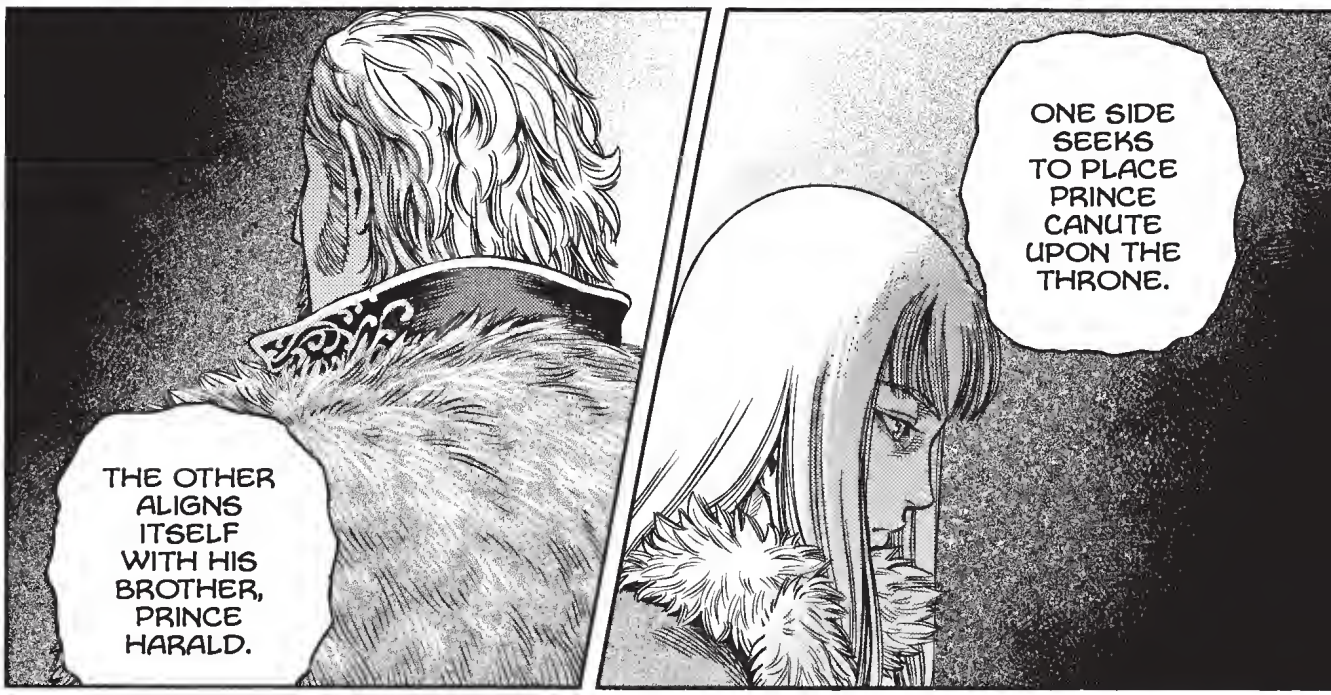
...IT SICKENS ME...
...TO LEAVE HIS HIGHNESS WITH A MAN LIKE YOU...

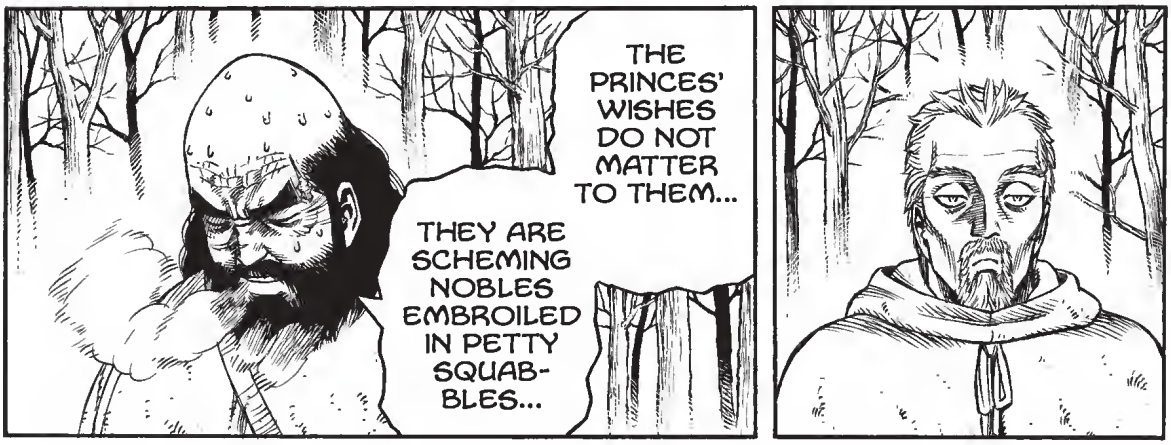

BETTER FINISH YOUR MESSAGE QUICKLY.
YOU'VE LOST MOST OF YOUR BLOOD.

BEFORE YOU HEAD TO GAINSBOR-OUGH...
...YOU OUGHT TO KNOW OF THE SUCCES-SION...

FFH
FFH


THE COURTIERS AT JELLING ARE FORMING TWO COMPETING FACTIONS...
...TO DETERMINE WHO SHALL BE THE FUTURE KING...

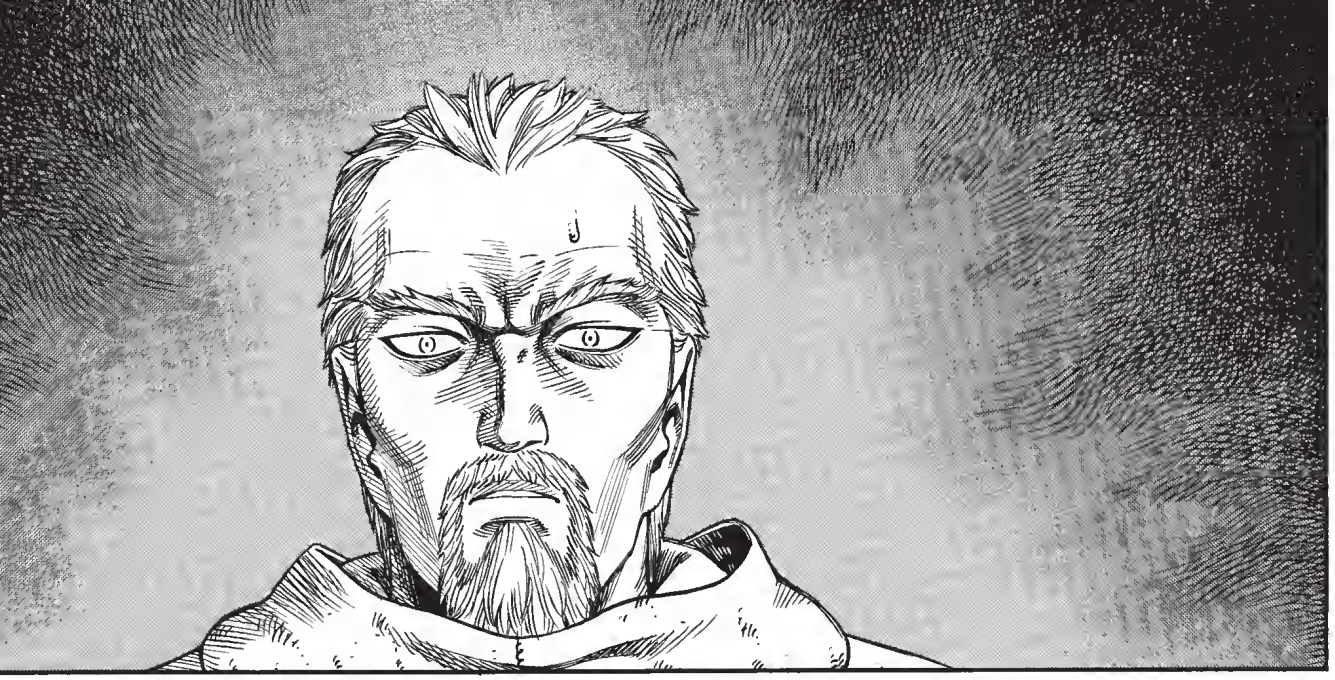

ONE SIDE SEEKS TO PLACE PRINCE CANUTE UPON THE THRONE.
THE OTHER ALIGNS ITSELF WITH HIS BROTHER, PRINCE HARALD.


THE PRINCES' WISHES DO NOT MATTER TO THEM...
THEY ARE SCHEMING NOBLES EMBROILED IN PETTY SQUAB-BLES...

HIS MAJESTY, PERHAPS FEARING THE KINGDOM MIGHT SPLIT...
...LIKELY FORCED HIMSELF TO MAKE A DECISION.
A DECISION TO KILL...
...ONE OF HIS TWO SONS...
...?
KING SWEYN DID THIS...?

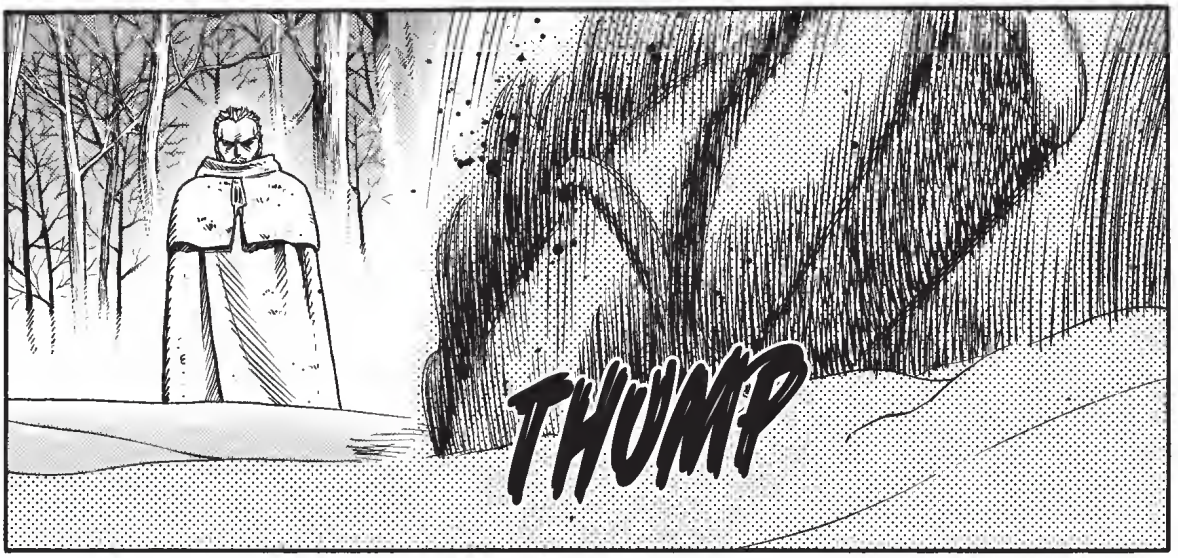
HIS MAJESTY SENT PRINCE CANUTE INTO THIS WAR...
...TO HAVE HIM DIE ON THE BATTLE-FIELD.

KNOW THIS, ASKELADD... PRINCE CANUTE'S TRUE ENEMY AT THIS MOMENT...
...IS NONE OTHER THAN HIS OWN FATHER, KING SWEYN...

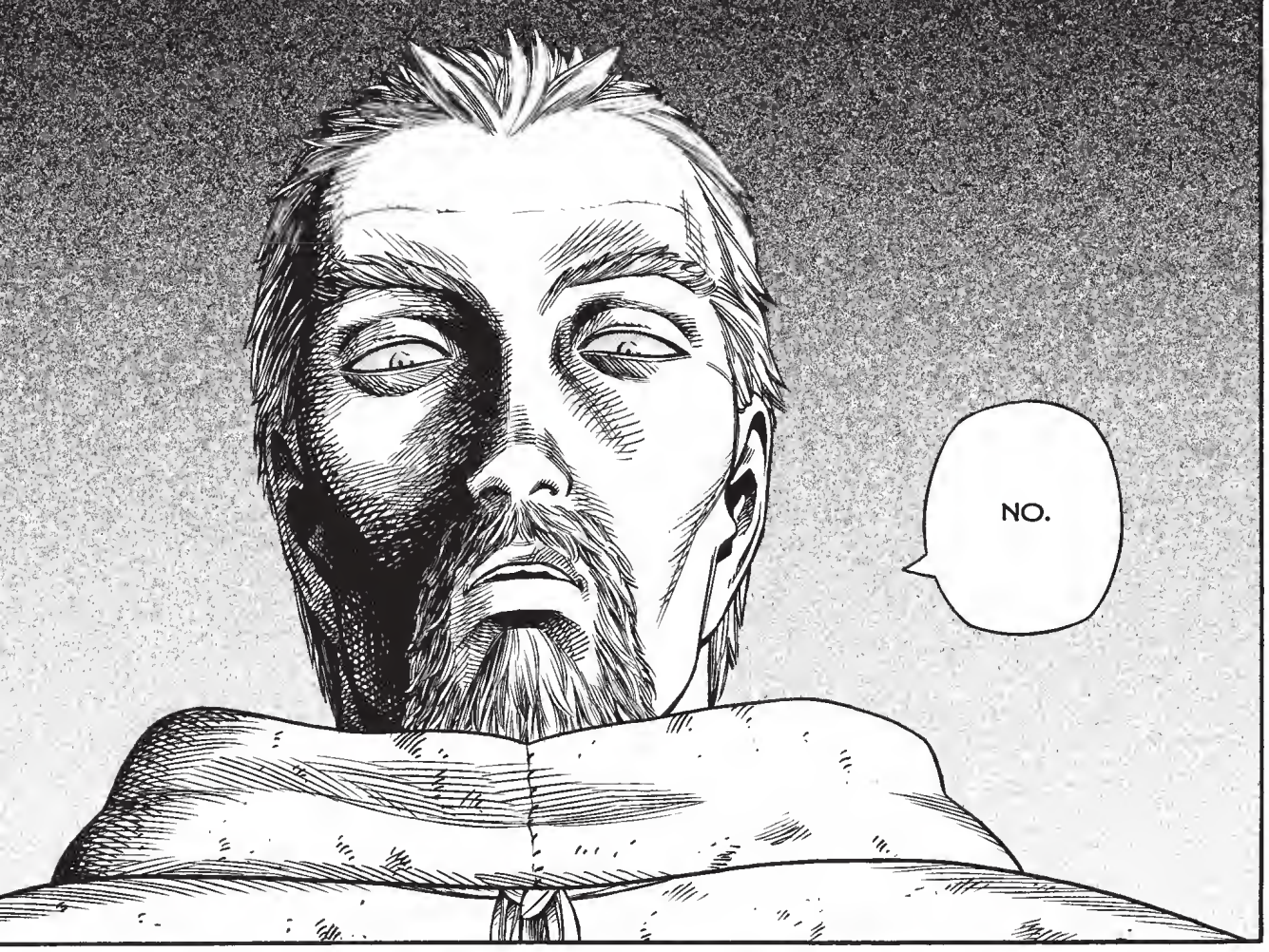


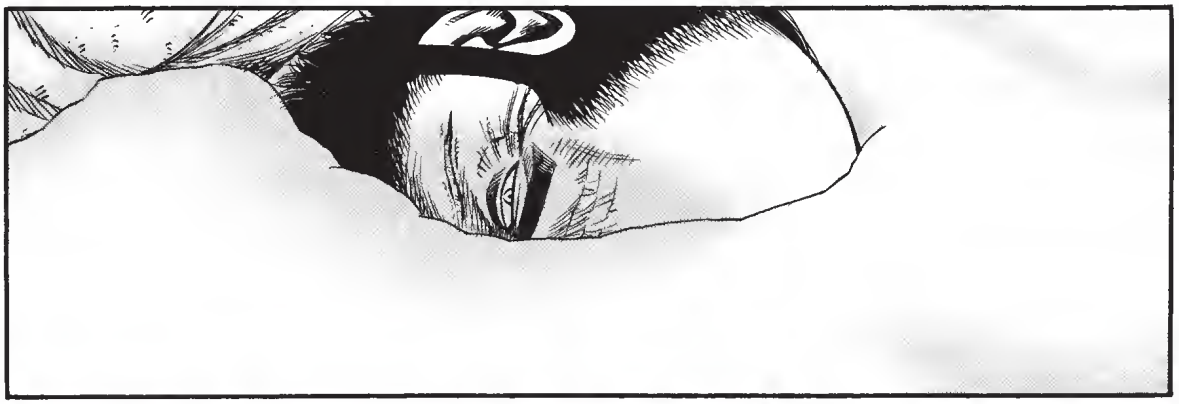
WHEN YOU REACH GAINSBOR-OUGH...
...MY BROTHER ...
...WILL HAVE ARRANGED ...
...FOR...
LURCH

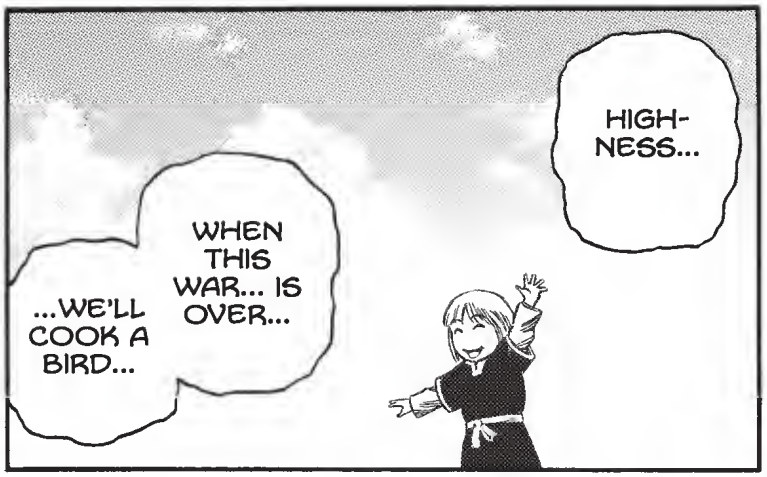
FLEE INTO EXILE. IT IS THE ONLY CHOICE LEFT...
FL-
BLORCH
SPLATCH

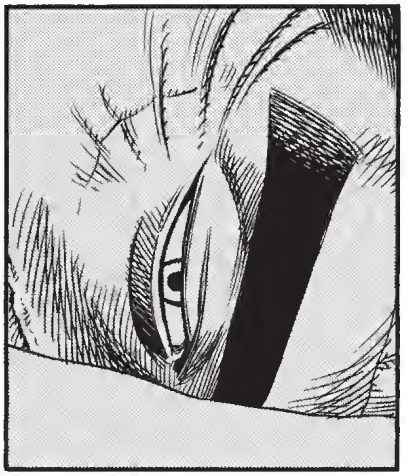

THUMP

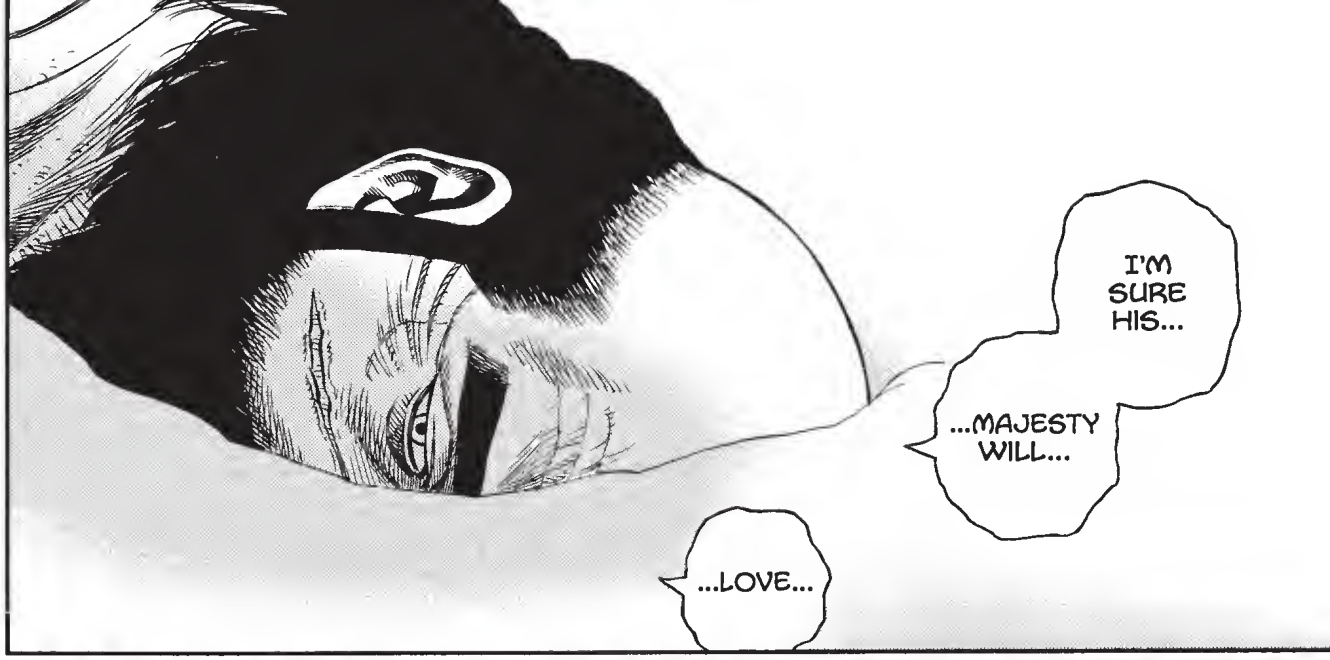
SCRITCH SCRATCH
...WELL, SHIT...
I'D HAVE LOVED TO HAVE KNOWN THAT EARLIER...
ONE...
...LAST RE-QUEST...
GIVE ME JUST...
...ONE LAST...
... GLIMPSE OF HIM...
TO SAY...
...FARE-WELL...


NO.

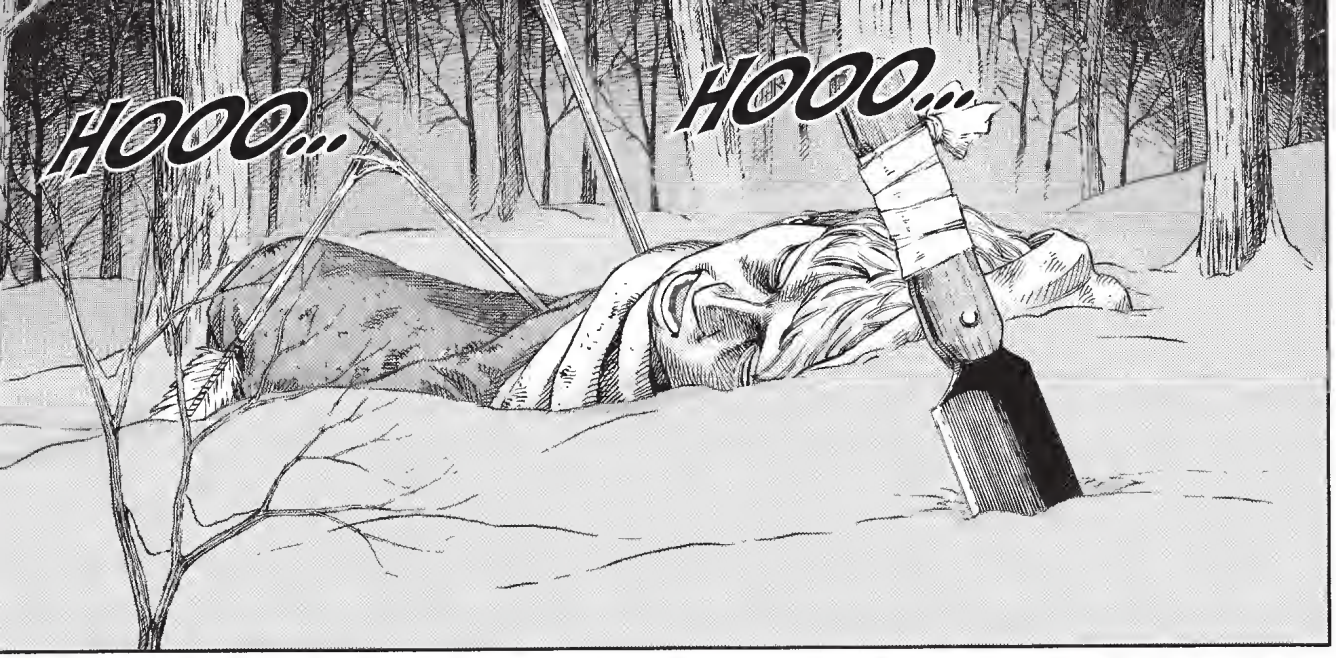



HIGH-
NESS...
WHEN THIS WAR... IS OVER...
...WE'LL COOK A BIRD...

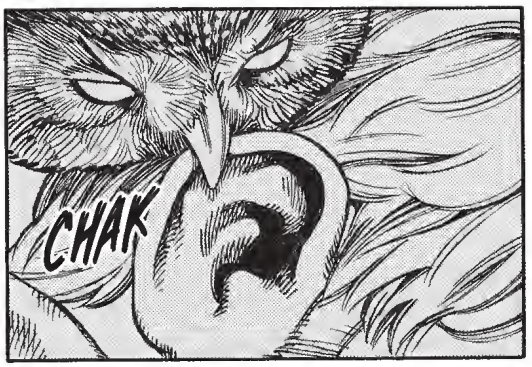


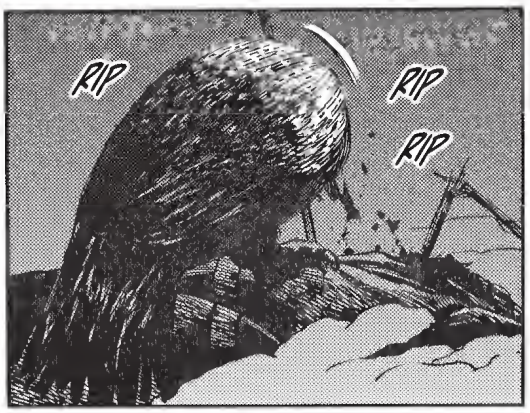


CHAPTER 30 - END

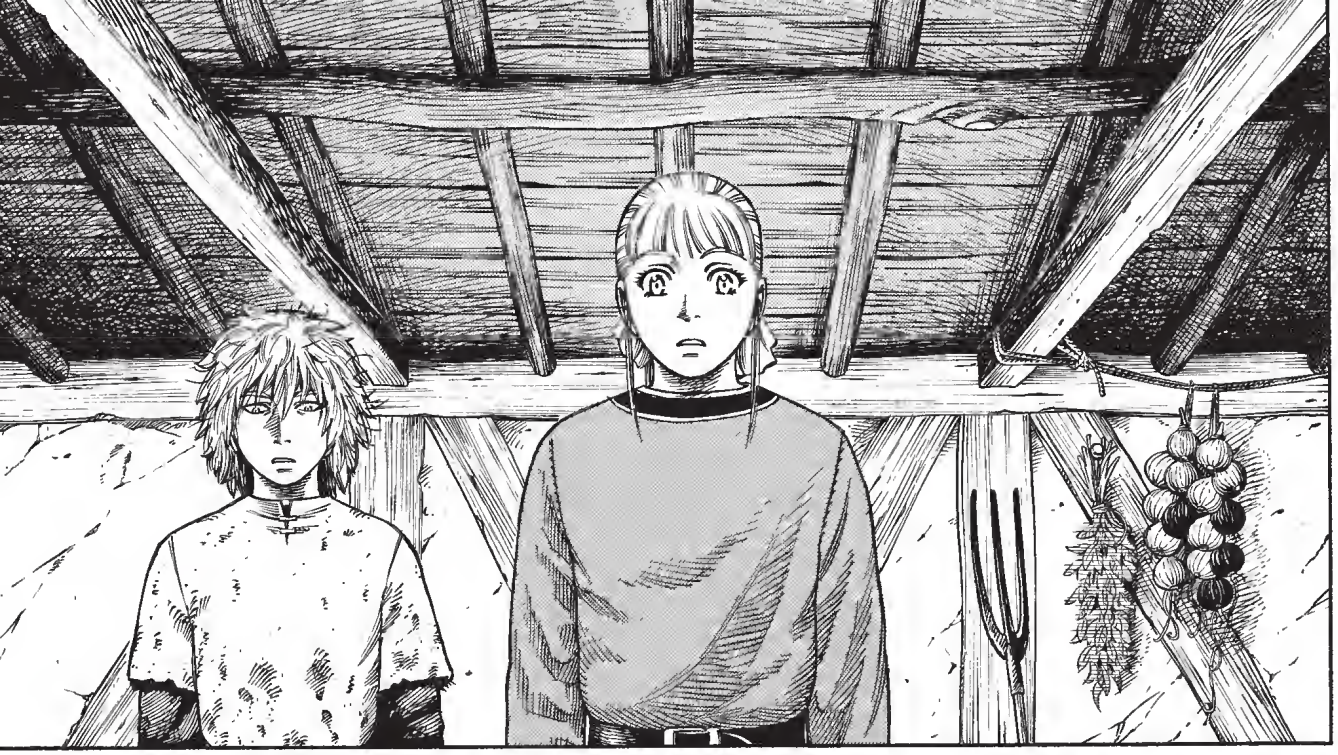

HOOO...
HOOO...

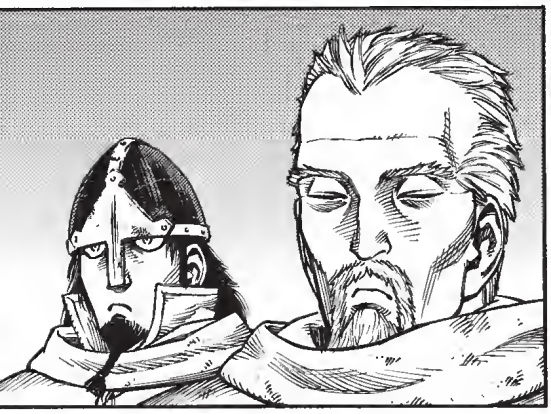
FLAP...

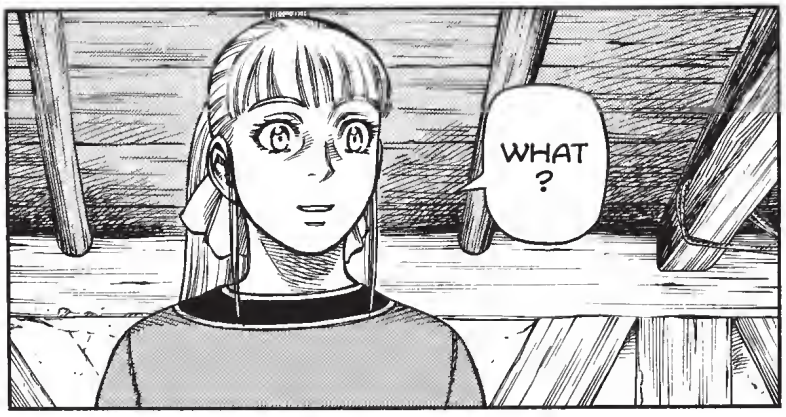

CHAK

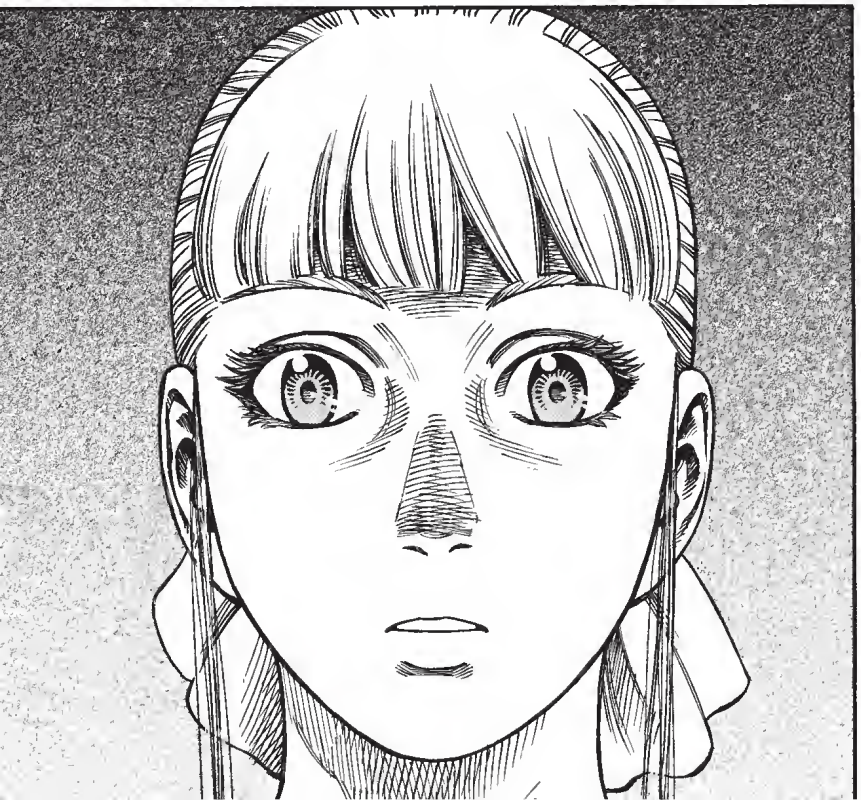

RIP
RIP
RIP

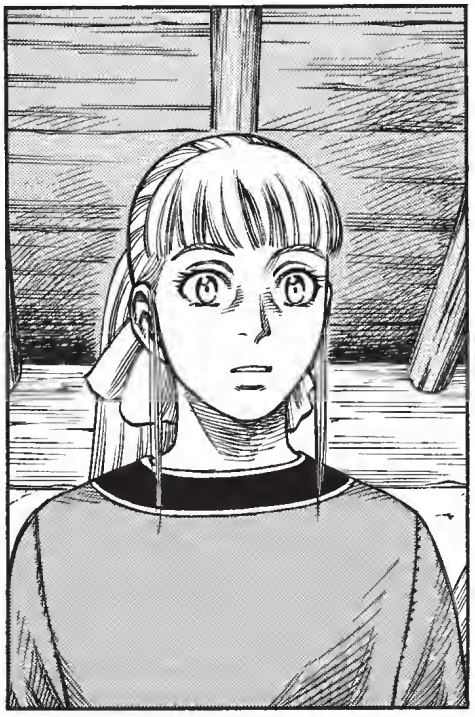
CHAPTER 31: HISTORY OF BEASTS

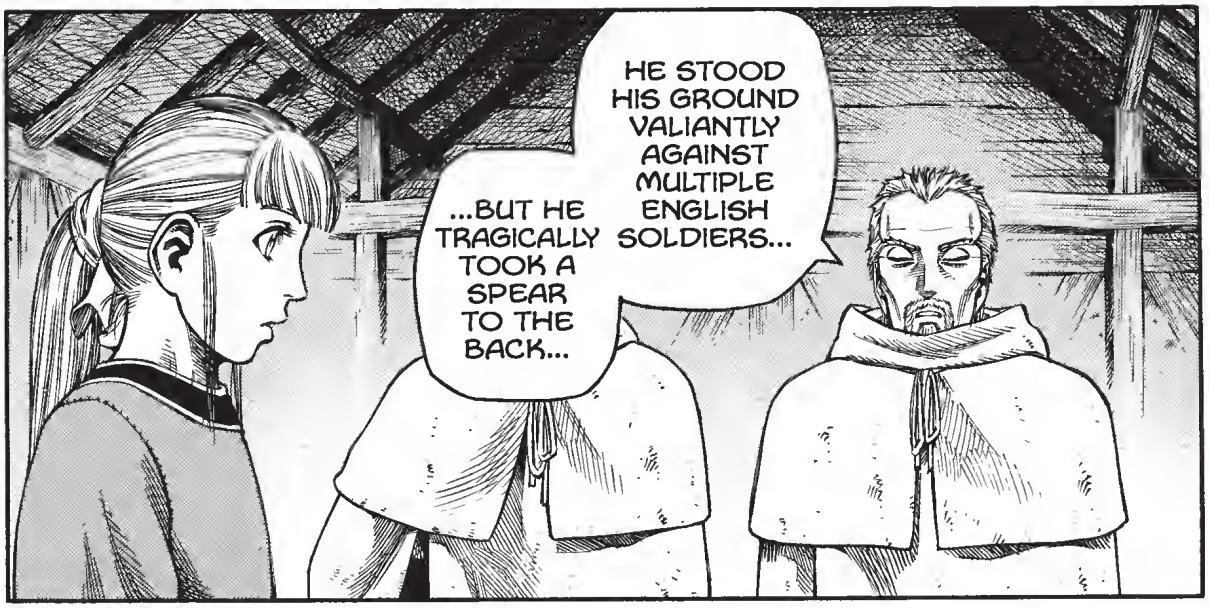




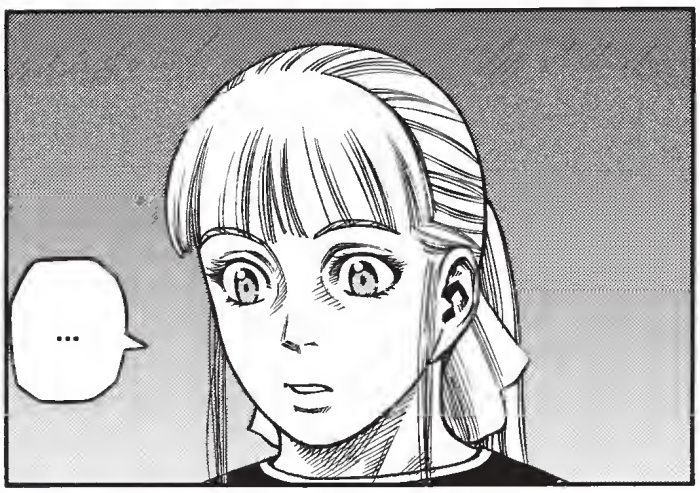

WHAT
?

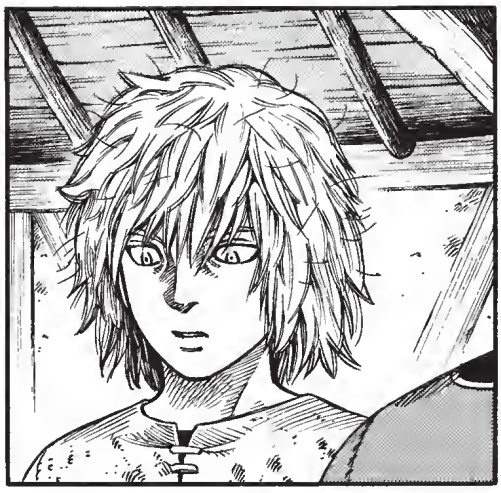





HE STOOD HIS GROUND VALIANTLY AGAINST MULTIPLE ENGLISH SOLDIERS...
...BUT HE TRAGICALLY TOOK A SPEAR TO THE BACK...

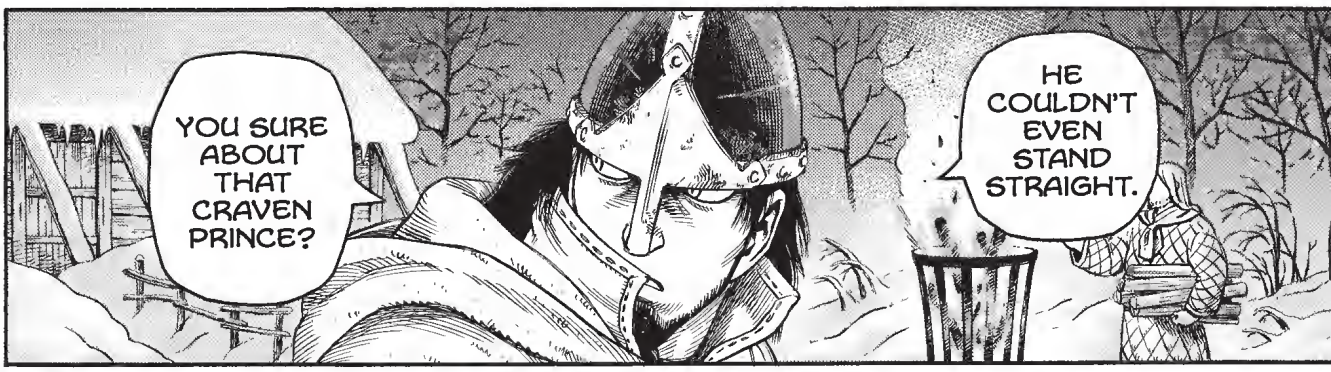
YOU HAVE MY DEEPEST SYMPATHIES, HIGHNESS.


...

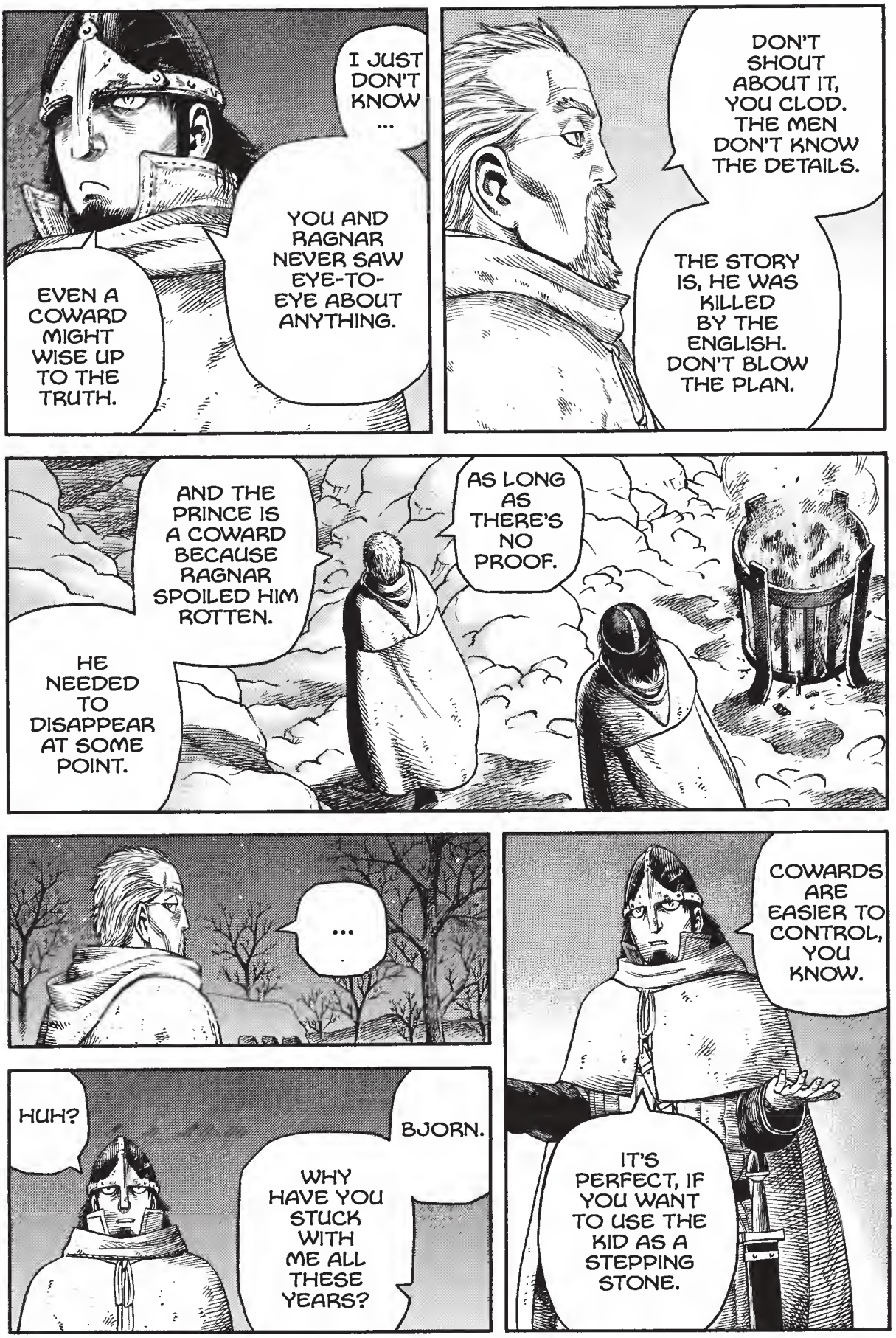


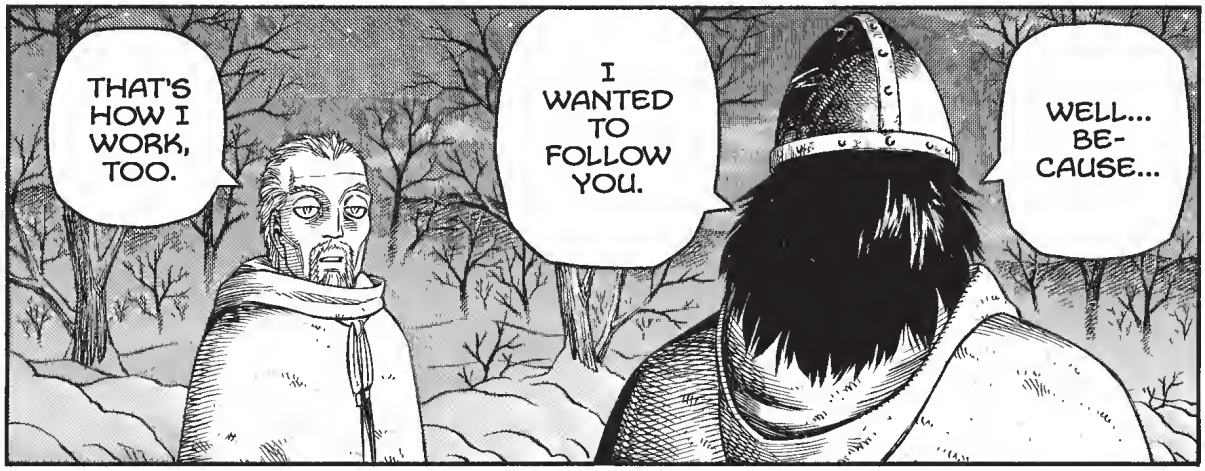
WE WERE EATING OUR RABBIT SOUP...
...AND HE JUST JUMPED UP AND LEFT...
?!
SHLIP
WHAT ?
THAT'S SO STRANGE, HE WAS JUST... HERE... AND NOW...
FLUMP...

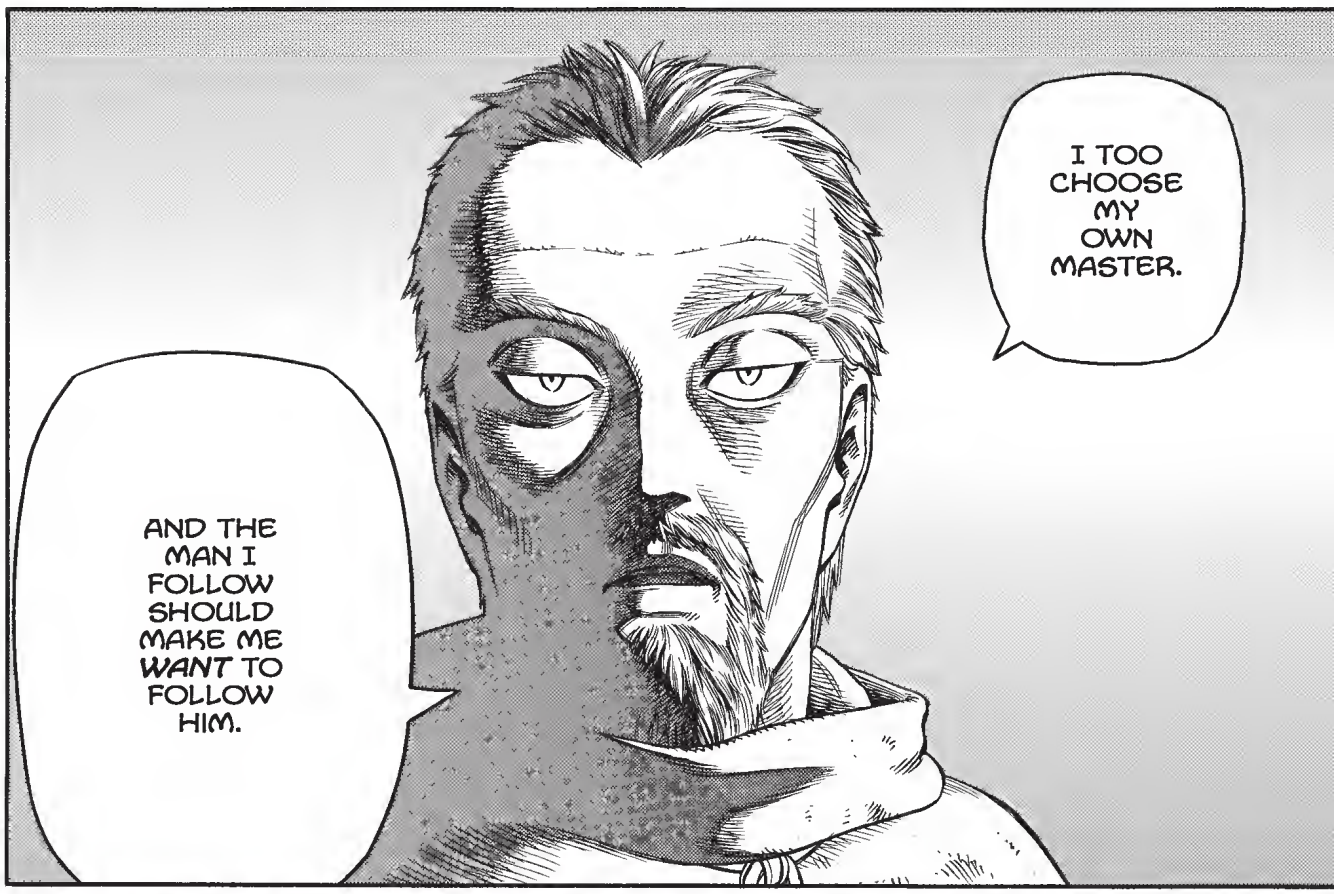
...
WHAT ?!
YOU CAN'T—
WE MUST PREPARE TO LEAVE AT ONCE.
DON'T LEAVE HIS SIDE, THORFINN.
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS! I'M NOT DOING IT!
PROTECTING HIS HIGHNESS IS *YOUR* JOB.
HEY, WAIT!

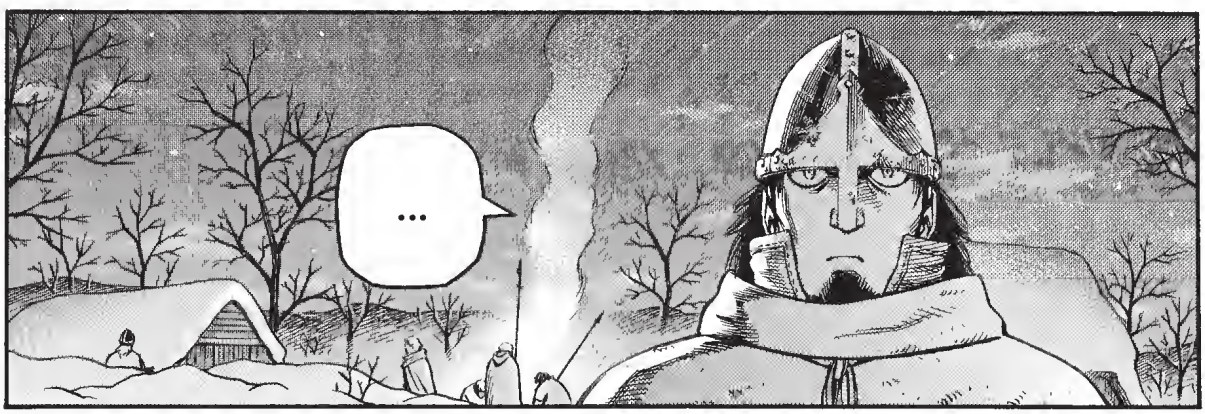

YOU SURE ABOUT THAT CRAVEN PRINCE?
HE COULDN'T EVEN STAND STRAIGHT.

I THINK YOUR PLAN'S BITTEN YOU IN THE ASS, ASKE-LADD.
WAS KILLING RAGNAR REALLY THE RIGHT MOVE?

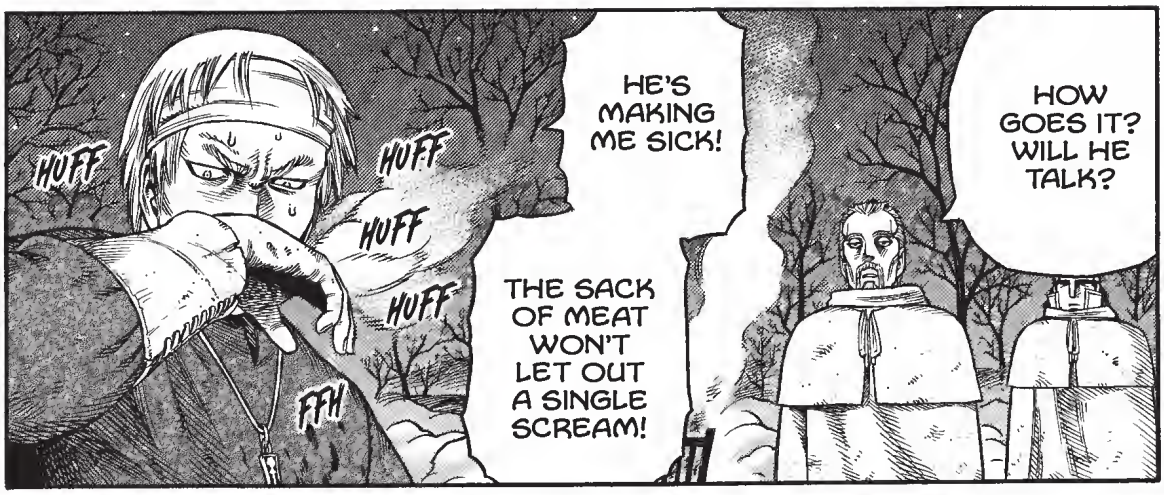

I JUST DON'T KNOW ...
YOU AND RAGNAR NEVER SAW EYE-TO-EYE ABOUT ANYTHING.
EVEN A COWARD MIGHT WISE UP TO THE TRUTH.
DON'T SHOUT ABOUT IT, YOU CLOD. THE MEN DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS.
THE STORY IS, HE WAS KILLED BY THE ENGLISH. DON'T BLOW THE PLAN.
AS LONG AS THERE'S NO PROOF.
AND THE PRINCE IS A COWARD BECAUSE RAGNAR SPOILED HIM ROTTEN.
HE NEEDED TO DISAPPEAR AT SOME POINT.
...
COWARDS ARE EASIER TO CONTROL, YOU KNOW.
IT'S PERFECT, IF YOU WANT TO USE THE KID AS A STEPPING STONE.
HUH?
BJORN.
WHY HAVE YOU STUCK WITH ME ALL THESE YEARS?

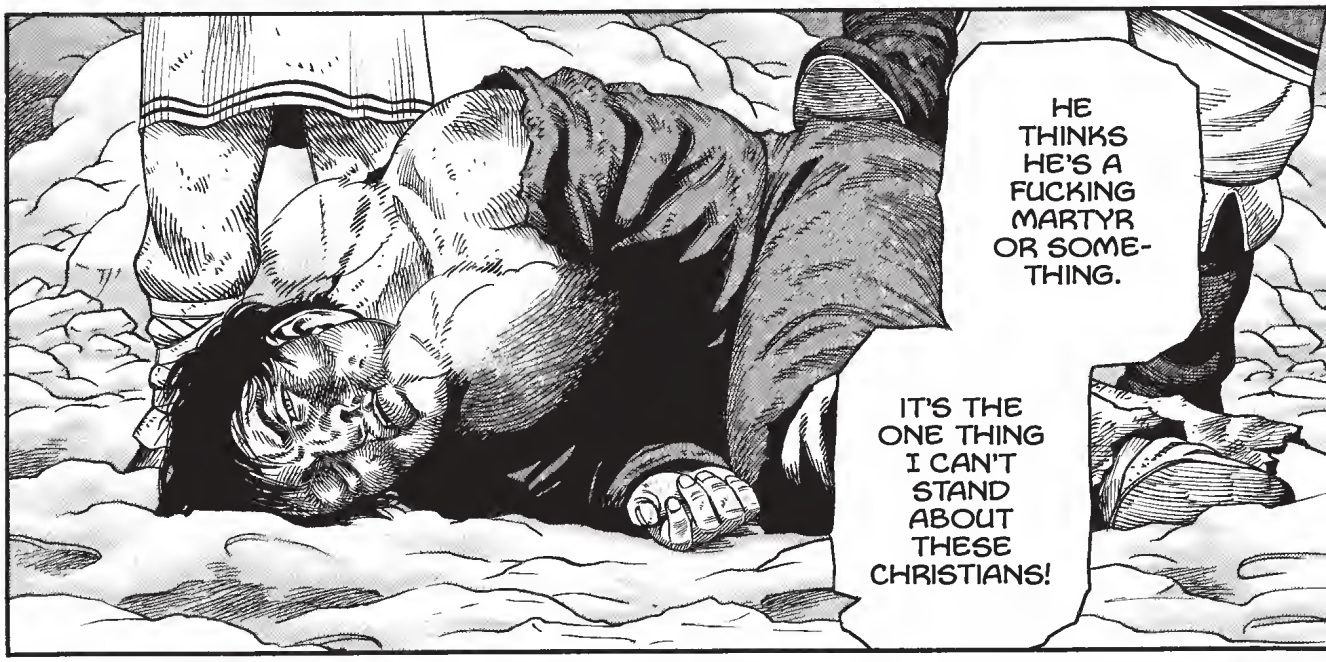

THAT'S HOW I WORK, TOO.
I WANTED TO FOLLOW YOU.
WELL... BE-CAUSE...


I TOO CHOOSE MY OWN MASTER.
AND THE MAN I FOLLOW SHOULD MAKE ME *WANT* TO FOLLOW HIM.


...

PAT PAT
IT'S A GAMBLE, BJORN.
MAYBE WE'LL GET LUCKY AND HE'LL BE REBORN A NEW MAN.
BUT WHO'S KEEPING SCORE?
AND WHAT IF IT DOESN'T TURN OUT WELL?
WHAT IF HE STAYS DOWN AND NEVER RECOVERS?
WHOMP, CRAKK
RAHH!
C'MON, LET'S SEE WHAT YOU GOT!
THWUD
HA HA HA HA HA
HE WON'T BE WORTHY OF ME.
THEN I'LL CUT HIM LOOSE.


HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
FFH
HE'S MAKING ME SICK!
THE SACK OF MEAT WON'T LET OUT A SINGLE SCREAM!
HOW GOES IT? WILL HE TALK?


HE THINKS HE'S A FUCKING MARTYR OR SOME-THING.
IT'S THE ONE THING I CAN'T STAND ABOUT THESE CHRISTIANS!

A REAL KICK LOOKS LIKE...

ON YOUR FEET, CAPTAIN.
IT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T KICK HARD ENOUGH.

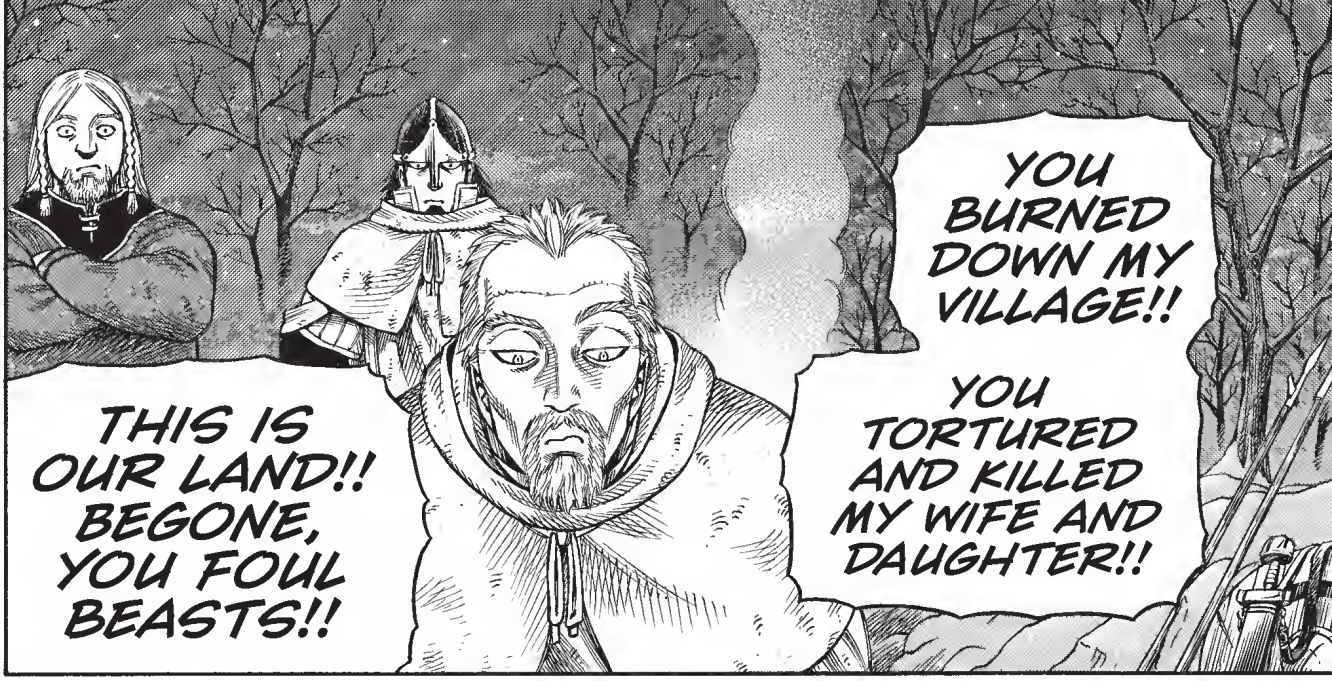
CRUKK
...THIS!
THWUMP
OOH! SPLENDID.
THAT WASN'T ANY BETTER. YOU HAVE TO GO STRAIGHT FOR THE JAW.
I'LL SHOW YOU HOW.
GOOD GRIEF.
KNOCK IT OFF!
NO, NO, I'M NEXT.
YOU HAVE TO GO EASY ON HIM.
HOW DO YOU PLAN TO GET ANSWERS FROM A DEAD MAN?
WE ARE GOING EASY ON HIM.

GOD SEES EVERYTHING...
INCLUDING ALL OF YOUR WICKED DEEDS...
HFF...
D...
DO YOUR WORST... KILL ME...
HFF...
GOT ANY SCIS-SORS?
BRING ME A PAIR.
HE SEEMS FINE TO ME.
HMM...
THE SIZE OF YOUR ALLIED FORCE.
I'M LOOKING FOR THREE THINGS.
HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE FOR THEM TO ARRIVE.
SMACK!!
WELL!
I'LL REPEAT MYSELF, MR. ENGLISH CAPTAIN.

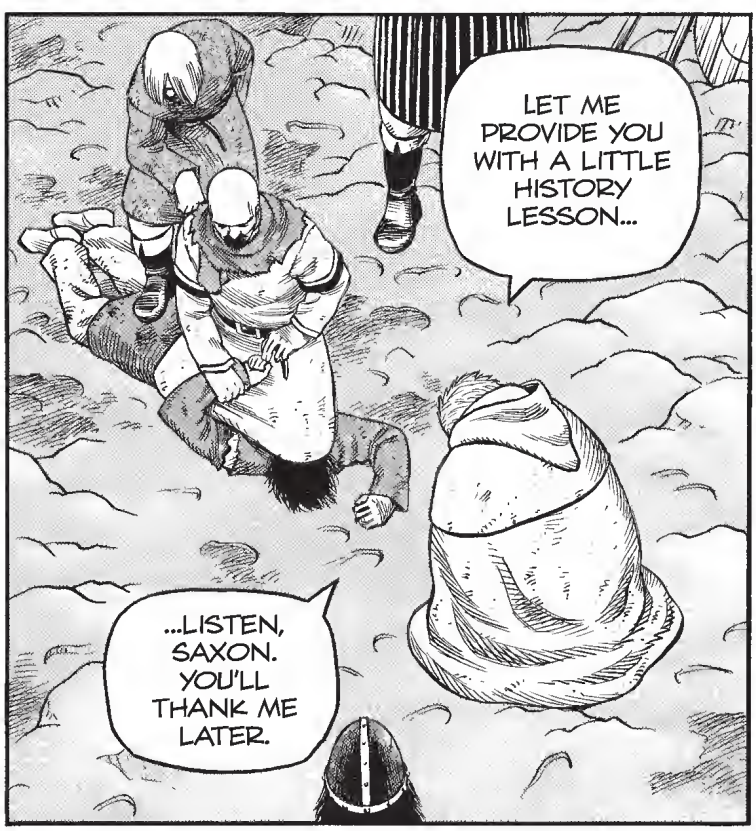
AND HOW YOU KNEW THAT WE WERE HERE.
TELL ME THESE THINGS, AND YOU'LL LIVE!
FOR YOUR JUDGMENT... COMES SWIFTLY...
HRRG...
Y-YOU WICKED BEASTS...
LEARN... TO FEAR GOD...
THIS WON'T DO, CAPTAIN...
YOUR NAILS ARE TOO LONG.
IT'S UN-SANITARY.
YOU REALLY OUGHT TO TRIM THEM.
ONE PAIR OF SHEARS.
HERE WE GO.

CHUNK
GAAAHHH!!!
WENT A LITTLE TOO DEEP.
OH! SORRY.
GH—

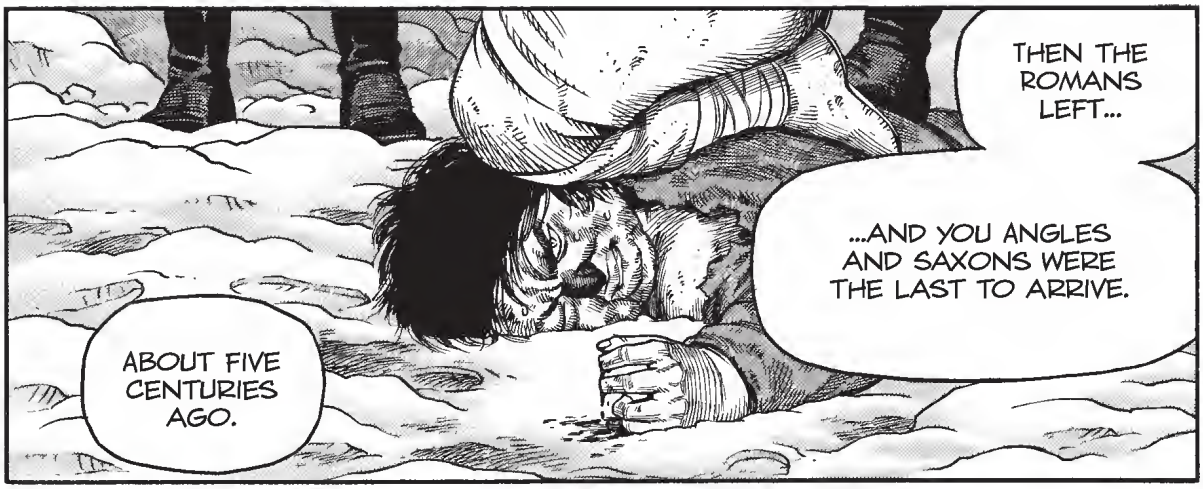
AAA AHH!!
HOLD HIM DOWN.
I'M LOOKING FOR THREE THINGS, AS YOU KNOW.
AAGH GAHAAH
CHUNK
CHUNK
OOH! WENT TOO DEEP AGAIN!!
TWICE THIS TIME!
~~~~~~!!
A A A O H, H!
WHY DOESN'T HE JUST GIVE IN?
YEESH! NASTY STUFF.
YOU DESERVE NOTHING LESS!! IF YOU HADN'T COME...!!
BURN IN HELL, YOU ACCURSED DANES!!
~~~~~~

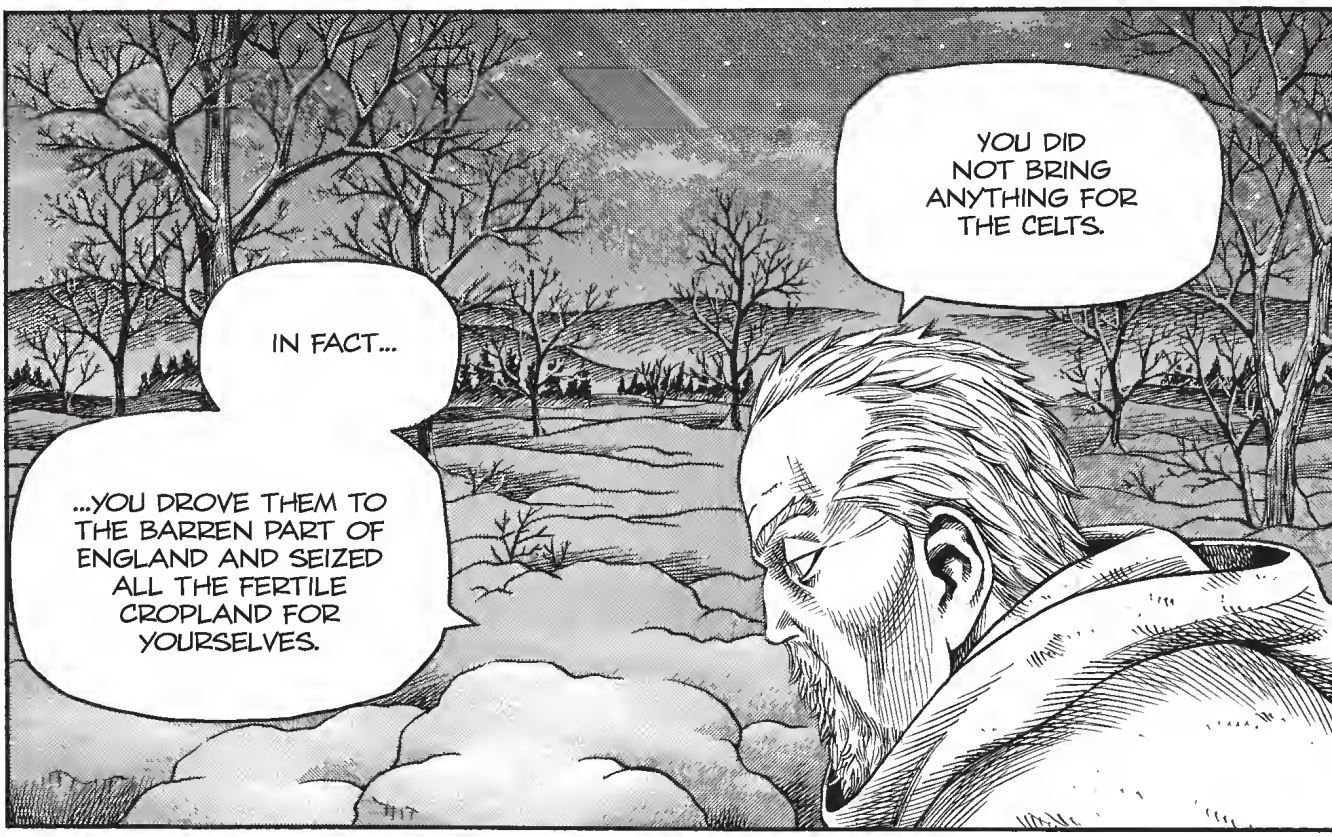

YOU BURNED DOWN MY VILLAGE!!
YOU TORTURED AND KILLED MY WIFE AND DAUGHTER!!
THIS IS OUR LAND!! BEGONE, YOU FOUL BEASTS!!

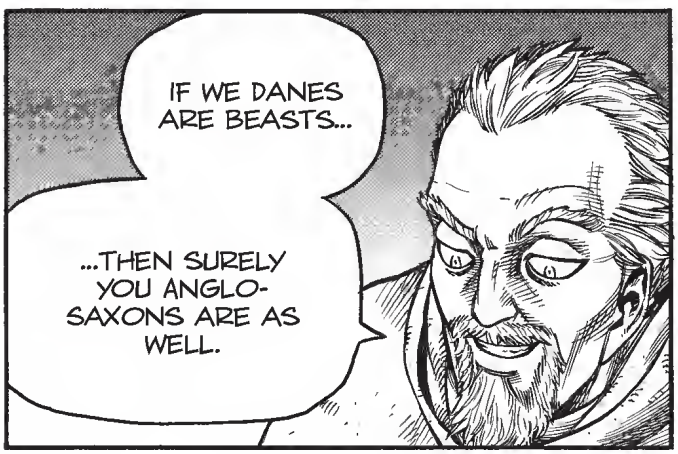
HMM... I SEEEE.
SO WE ARE BEASTS. IS THAT RIGHT?

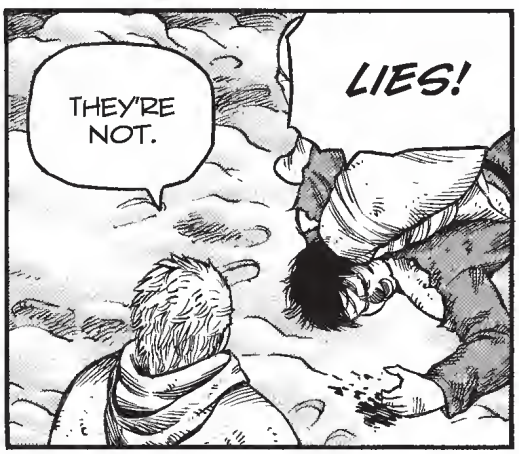

LET ME PROVIDE YOU WITH A LITTLE HISTORY LESSON...
...LISTEN, SAXON. YOU'LL THANK ME LATER.

THIS LAND DID NOT ORIGINALLY BELONG TO YOU.
OR WERE YOU ANGLES AROUND HERE?
WHICH-EVER, IT DOESN'T MATTER.
THE FIRST INHABITANTS WERE THE CELTS.
THEY LIVED IN THE FOREST AND WORSHIPPED SPIRITS.
THEY WERE THE ANCESTORS OF TODAY'S WELSH PEOPLE.
LATER CAME THE ROMANS.
YES, THEY RULED THIS ISLAND, BUT THEY LIVED TOGETHER WITH THE CELTS...
...AND SHARED THEIR KNOWLEDGE, TECHNOLOGY, AND CULTURE.


ABOUT FIVE CENTURIES AGO.
THEN THE ROMANS LEFT...
...AND YOU ANGLES AND SAXONS WERE THE LAST TO ARRIVE.

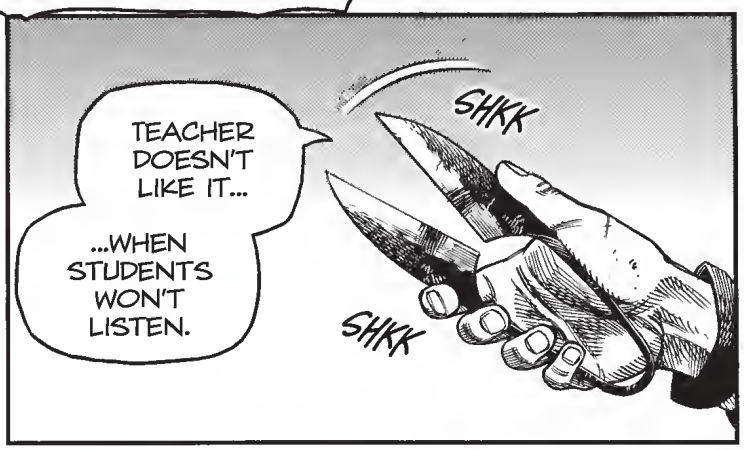

YOU DID NOT BRING ANYTHING FOR THE CELTS.
IN FACT...
...YOU DROVE THEM TO THE BARREN PART OF ENGLAND AND SEIZED ALL THE FERTILE CROPLAND FOR YOURSELVES.


IF WE DANES ARE BEASTS...
...THEN SURELY YOU ANGLO-SAXONS ARE AS WELL.


THEY'RE NOT.
LIES!

YOU STOLE THIS LAND WITH VIOLENCE.
AND NOW WE ARE TAKING IT WITH GREATER VIOLENCE.
YOU REALLY CAN'T COMPLAIN ABOUT THAT.

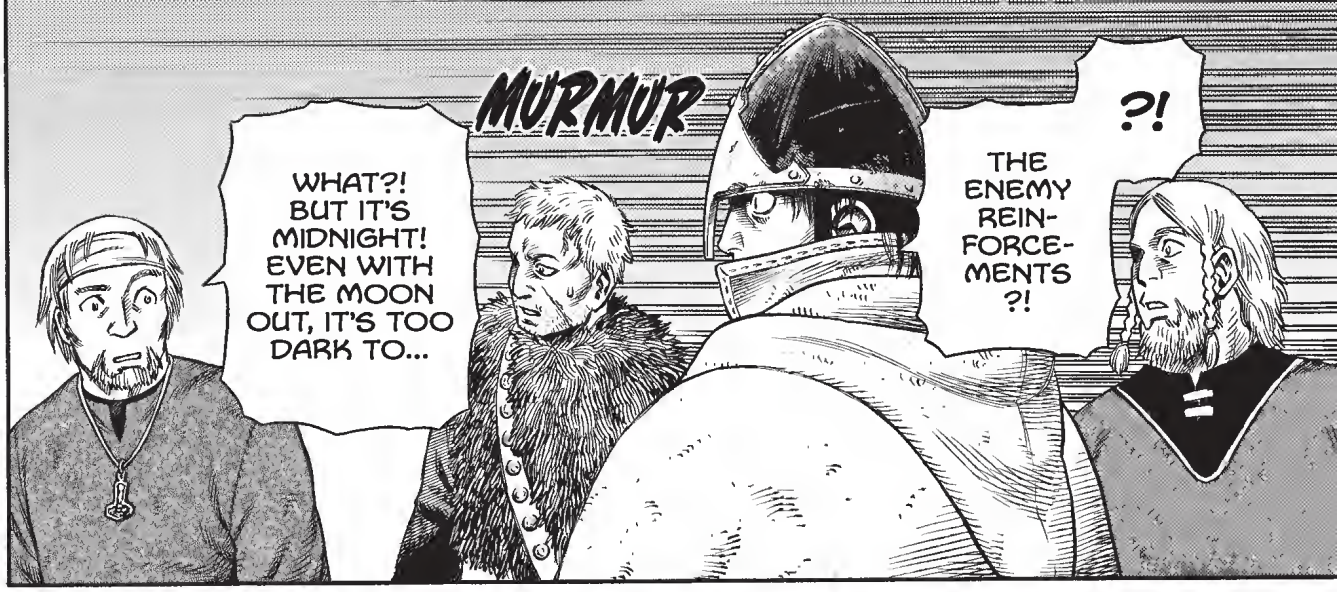
BE SILENT !!
WHO WOULD BELIEVE THE WORDS OF A BARBARIAN?!

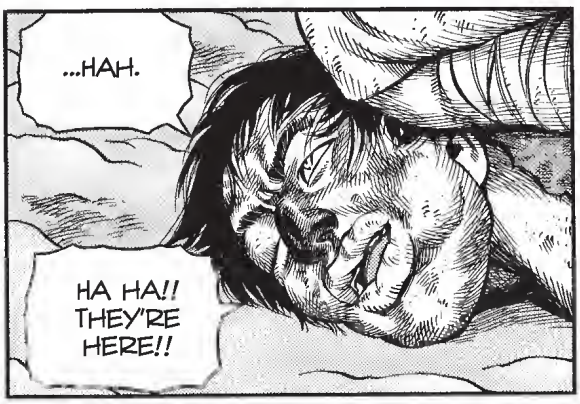

TEACHER DOESN'T LIKE IT...
...WHEN STUDENTS WON'T LISTEN.
SHKK
SHKK

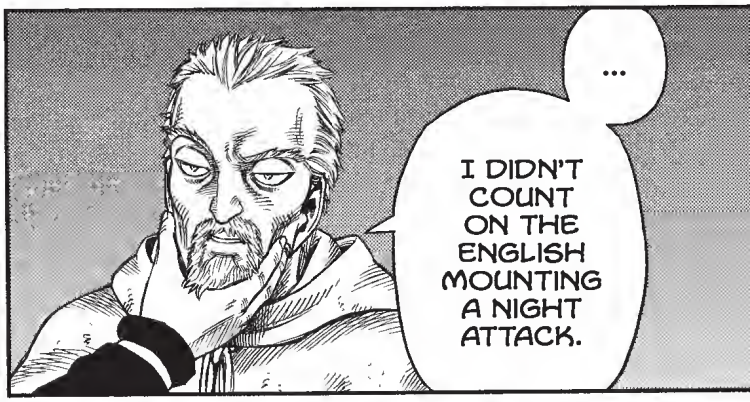
MMM...

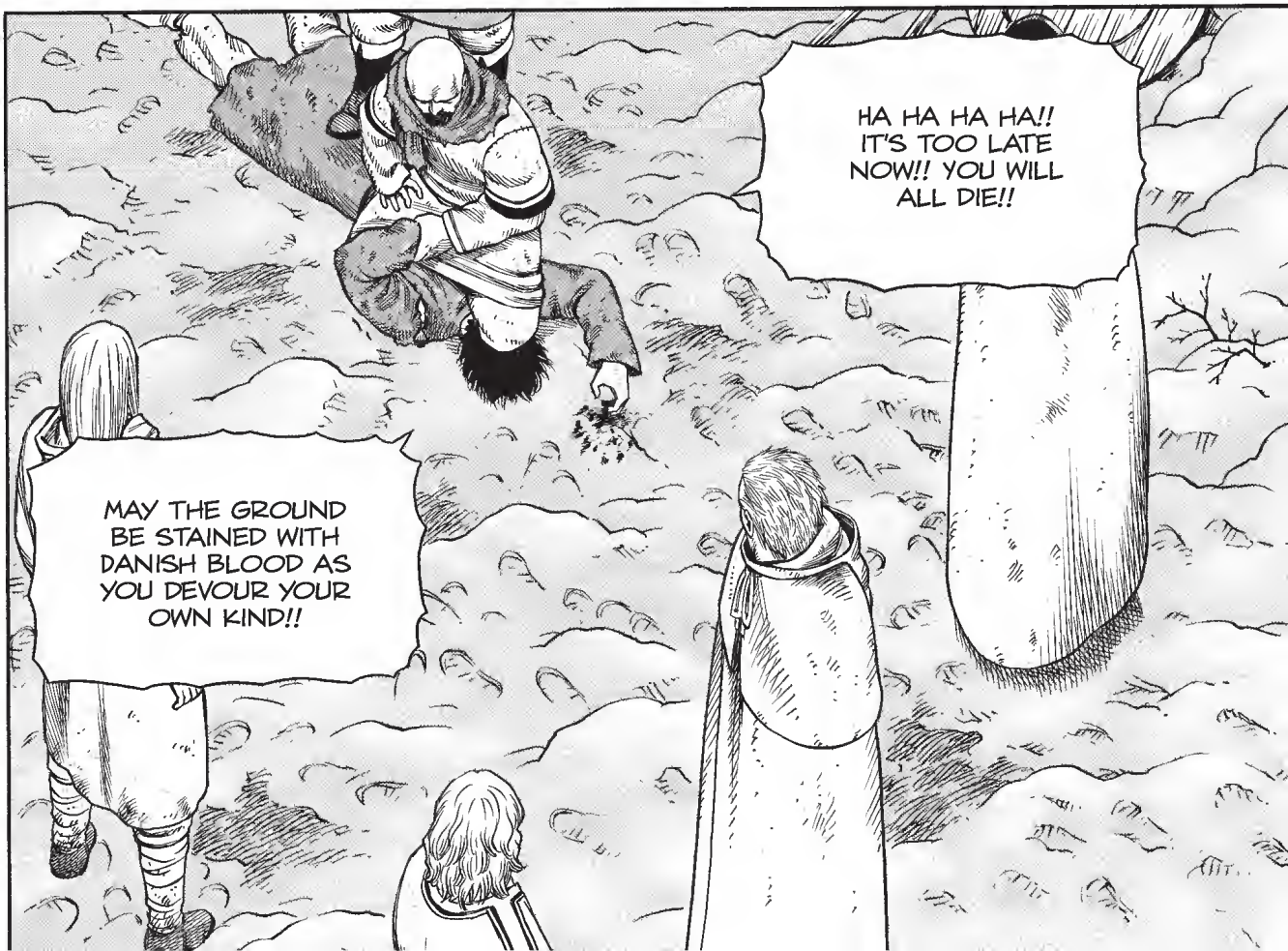
WHAT'S THIS, CAPTAIN?
NOW THAT I GET A BETTER LOOK AT YOU, I CAN SEE...
OH?!
YOUR NOSE...
...COULD USE A TRIM AS WELL.
...!!
HRRKKK...

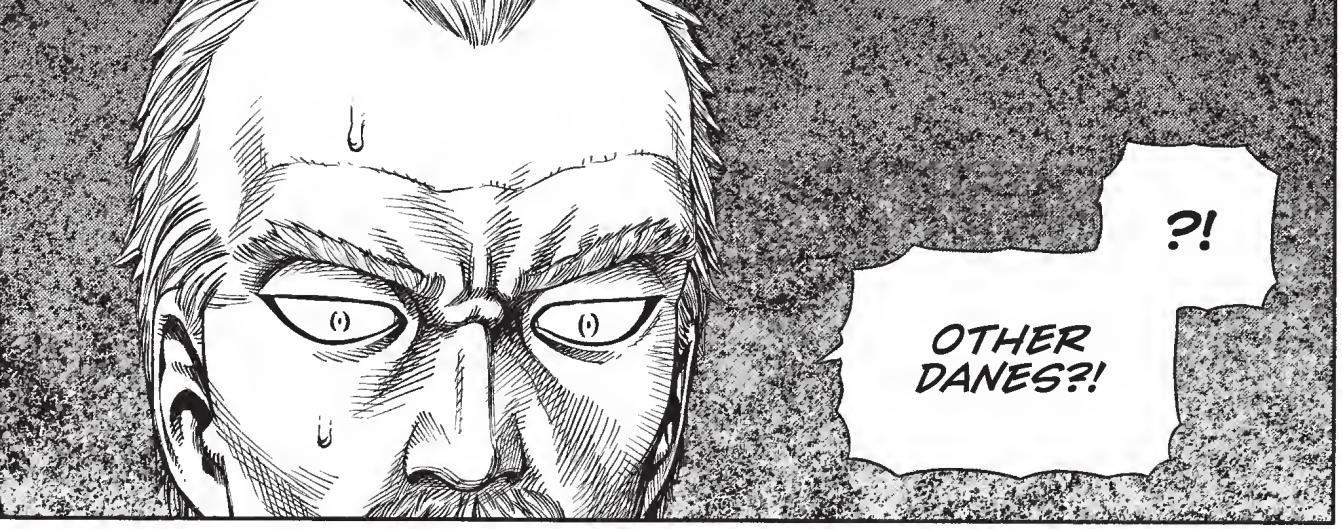
ASKE-
LADD
!!
ZSHH
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
...!!
HOW MANY?!
I DON'T KNOW! MANY!!
FROM THE SOUTH !!
ZPP


MURMUR
WHAT?! BUT IT'S MIDNIGHT! EVEN WITH THE MOON OUT, IT'S TOO DARK TO...
THE ENEMY REIN-FORCE-MENTS ?!
?!


...HAH.
HA HA!! THEY'RE HERE!!


...
I DIDN'T COUNT ON THE ENGLISH MOUNTING A NIGHT ATTACK.


HA HA HA HA!! IT'S TOO LATE NOW!! YOU WILL ALL DIE!!
MAY THE GROUND BE STAINED WITH DANISH BLOOD AS YOU DEVOUR YOUR OWN KIND!!


?!
OTHER DANES?!

I'LL TELL YOU NOW! IT'S THORKELL ON YOUR HEELS!!
HE SHOULD BE MORE THAN A MATCH FOR YOU!!
THORKELL!! HA HA HA! HA HA HA HA!!

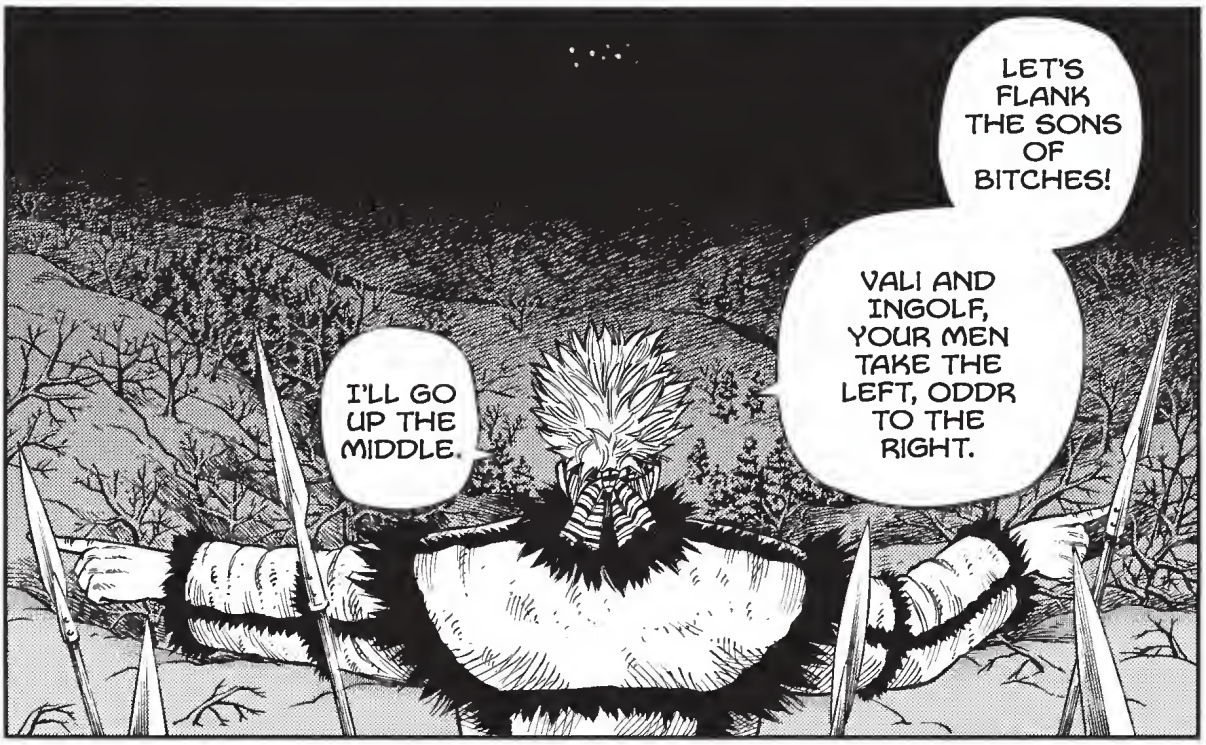
D-DUN-NO...
MAYBE HE DID, MAYBE HE DIDN'T...
UH... DID HE JUST SAY "THOR-KELL"?
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

...TSK...
REALLY?!
THOR-KELL?!

THOR-KELL ?!
DID I HEAR THAT RIGHT?!
NO WAY!!
DID THEY SAY THOR-KELL?!
THOR-KELL'S COMING !!

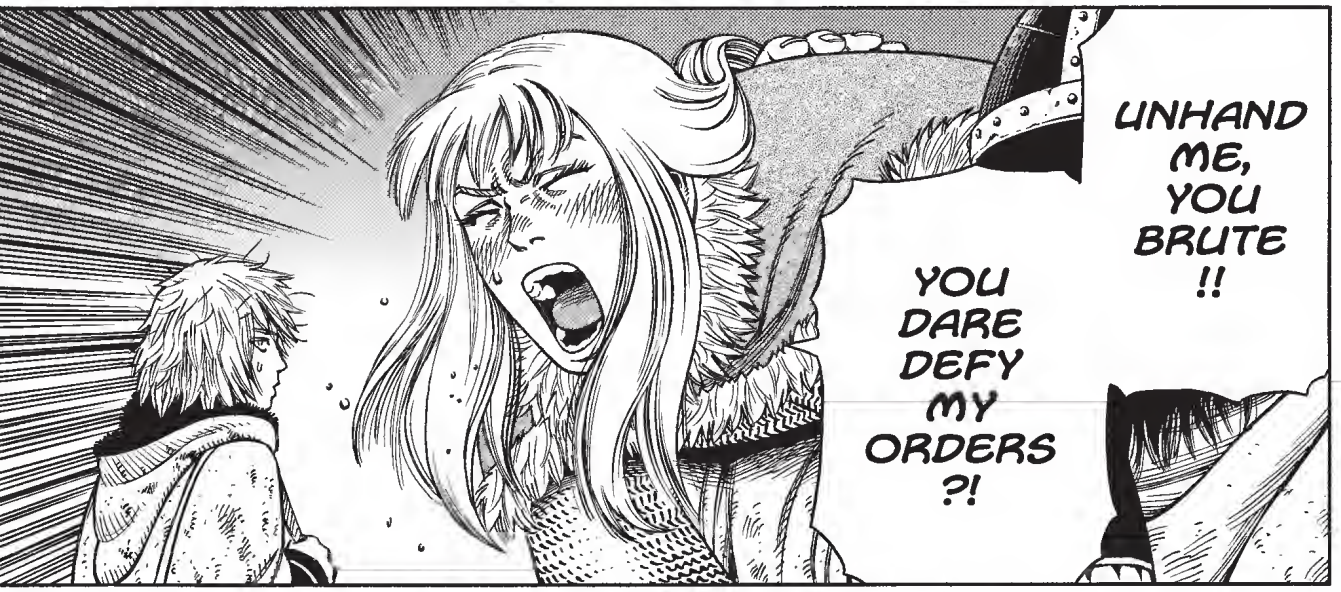
BWA—
KSHHT!
BFFP

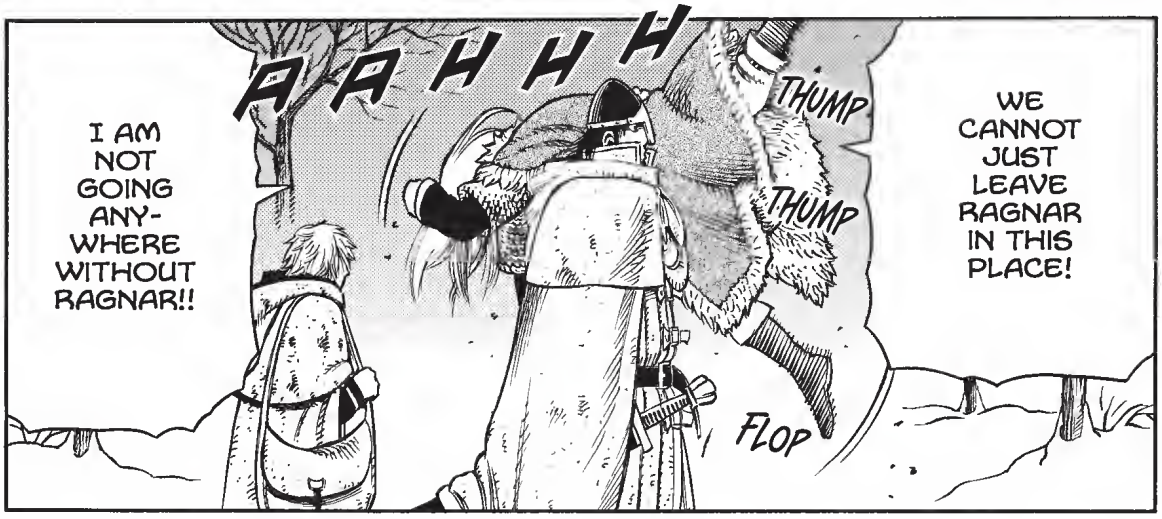
LOOKS LIKE IT.
THAT'S THE VILLAGE ?
SNRRT

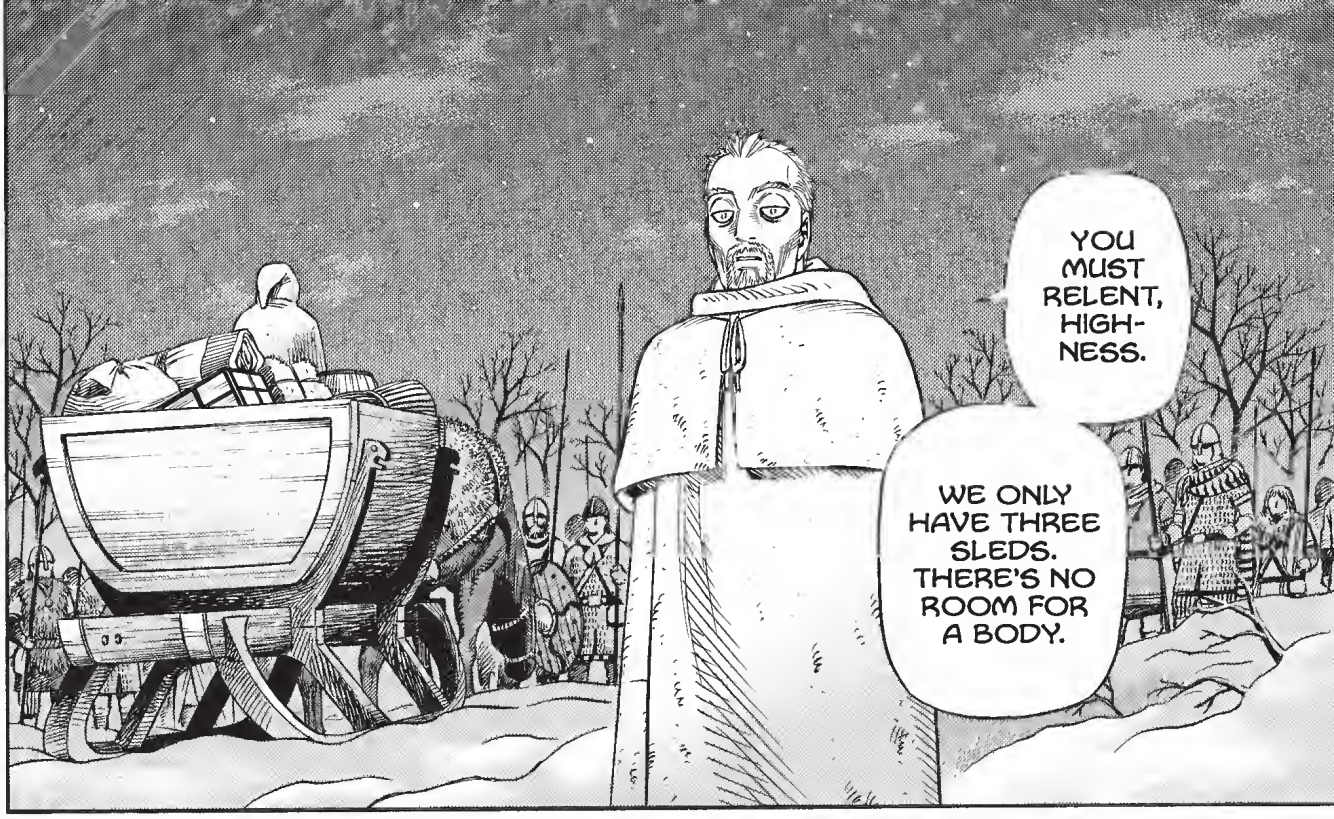

LET'S FLANK THE SONS OF BITCHES!
VALI AND INGOLF, YOUR MEN TAKE THE LEFT, ODDR TO THE RIGHT.
I'LL GO UP THE MIDDLE.

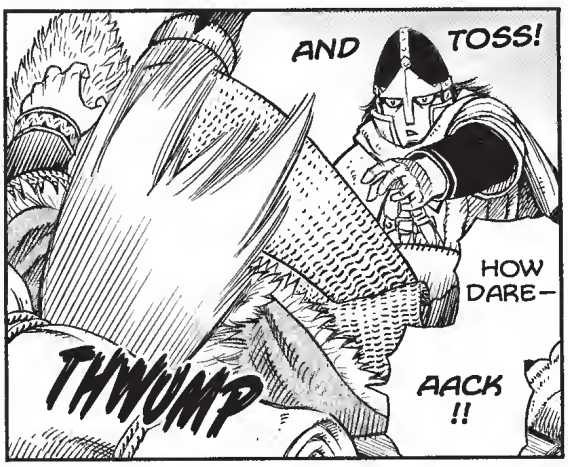
ALSO, YOU MIGHT COME ACROSS A SHORT ONE WIELDING TWO KNIVES.
JUST DON'T KILL THE PRINCE.
EXPECT TO MASSACRE THE WHOLE LOT OF THEM!

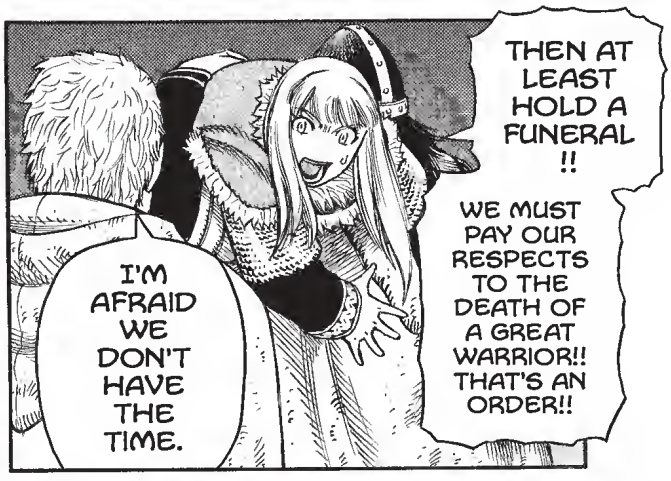
DON'T KILL HIM, EITHER.
HE'S MINE.


UNHAND ME, YOU BRUTE !!
YOU DARE DEFY MY ORDERS ?!

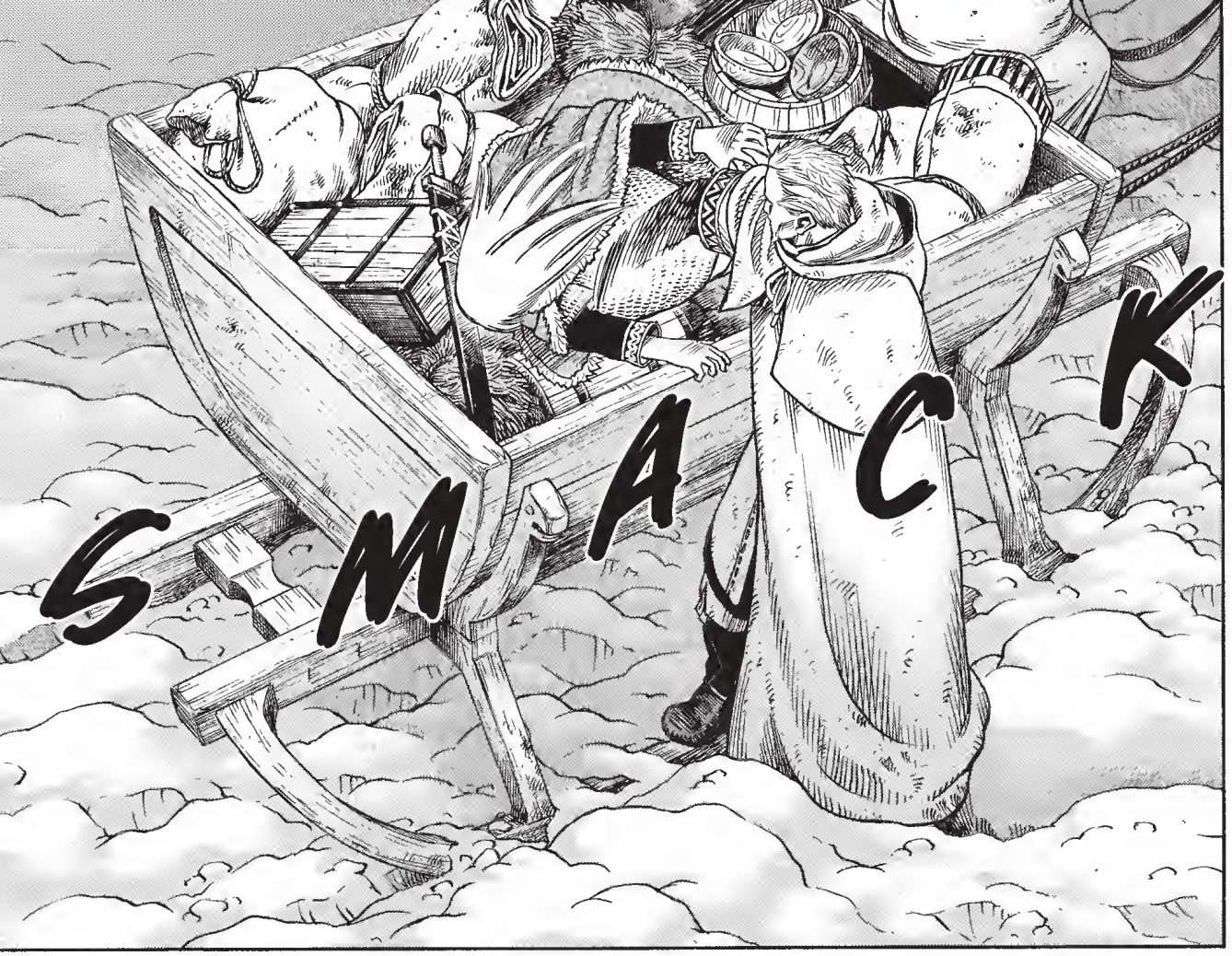

AAHHH
THUMP
THUMP
FLOP
I AM NOT GOING ANY-WHERE WITHOUT RAGNAR!!
WE CANNOT JUST LEAVE RAGNAR IN THIS PLACE!

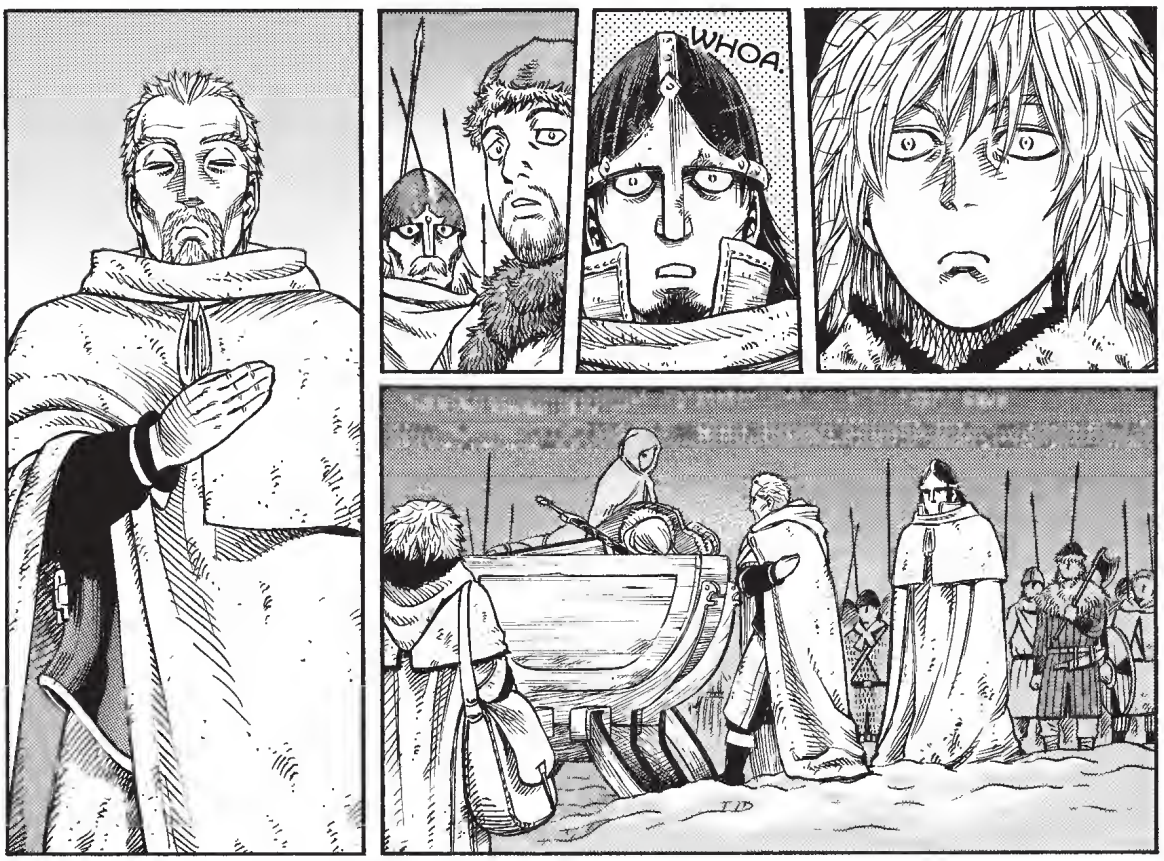

YOU MUST RELENT, HIGH-NESS.
WE ONLY HAVE THREE SLEDS. THERE'S NO ROOM FOR A BODY.


AND TOSS!
HOW DARE—
THWUMP
AACK !!

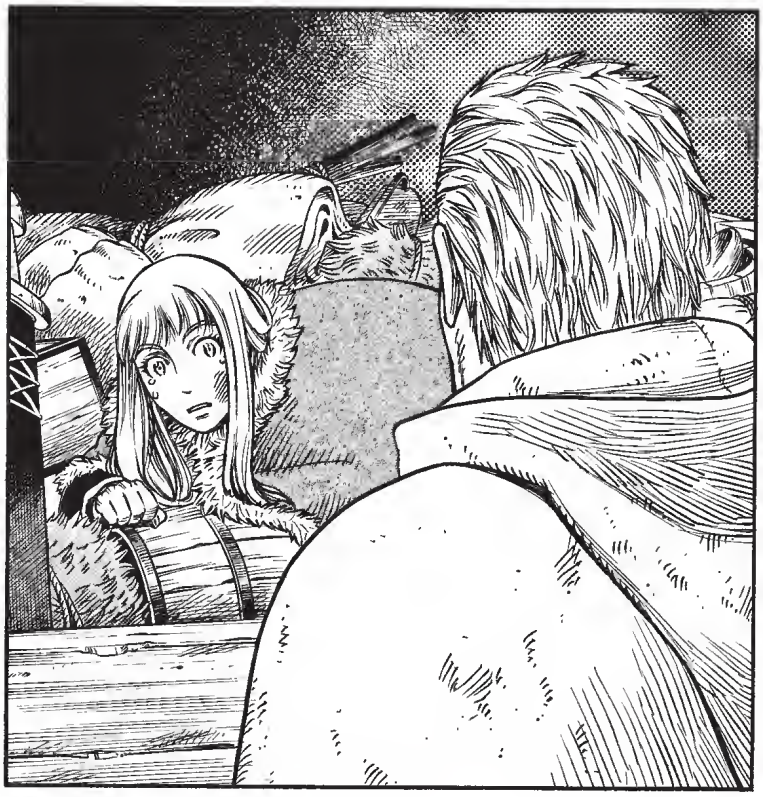

THEN AT LEAST HOLD A FUNERAL !!
WE MUST PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THE DEATH OF A GREAT WARRIOR!! THAT'S AN ORDER!!
I'M AFRAID WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME.

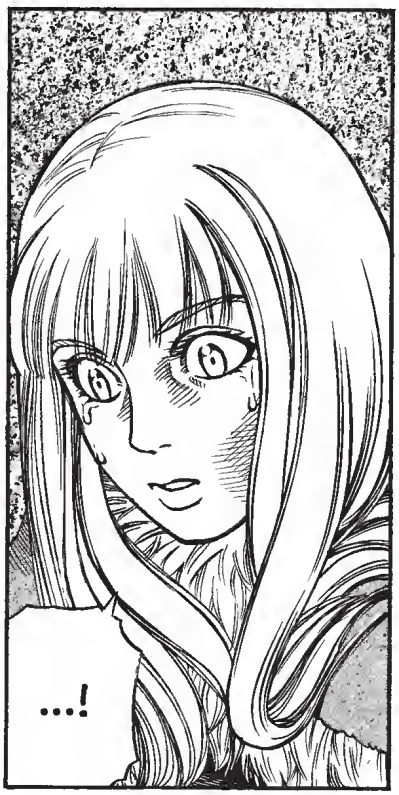
NOOOO! I'M NOT GOING ANY-WHERE !!
RAG-NAR!! RAG-NAAAR !!

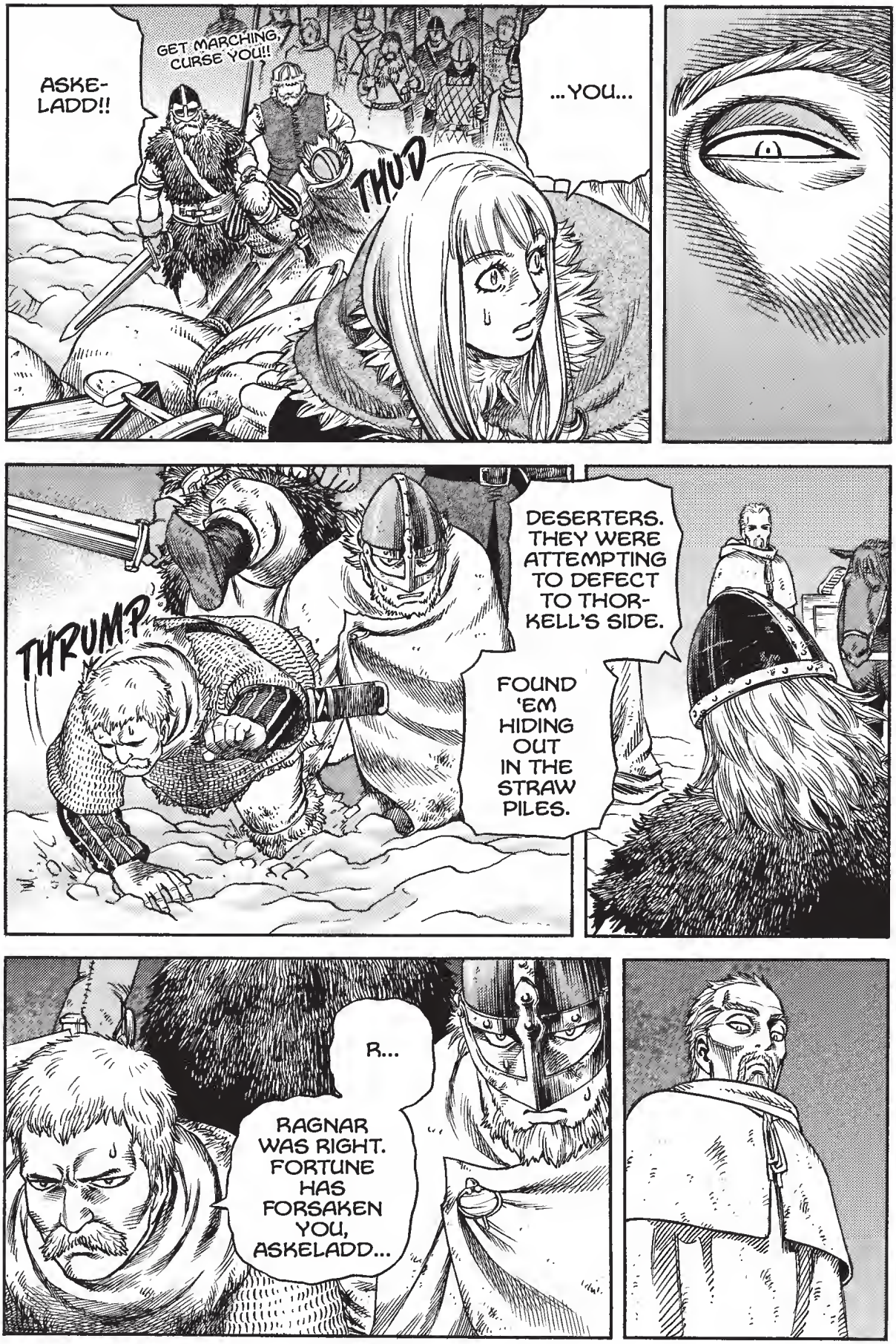

SMACK


WHOA.

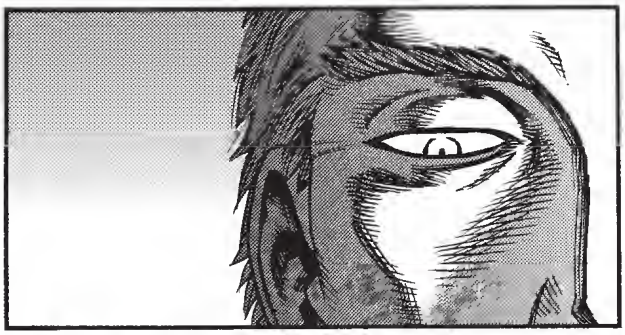
RAGNAR...
...IS DEAD.
AND HE'S NEVER COMING BACK.

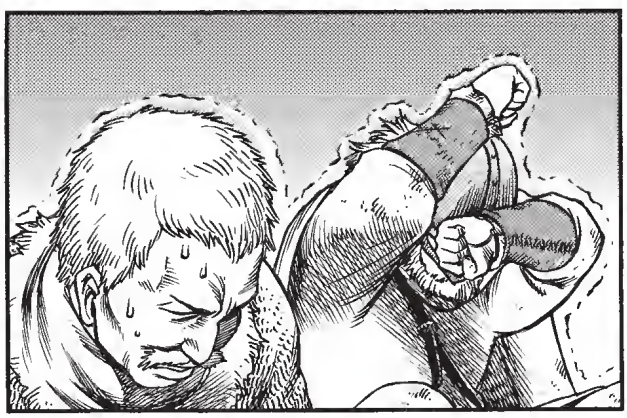



...!

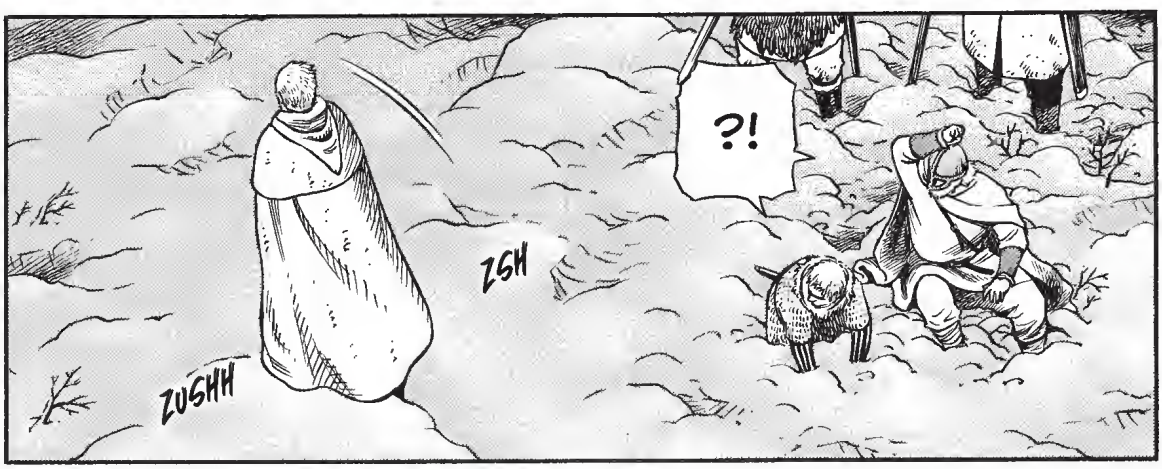

ASKE-
LADD!!
GET MARCHING, CURSE YOU!!
THUD
...YOU...
THRUMP
DESERTERS. THEY WERE ATTEMPTING TO DEFECT TO THOR-KELL'S SIDE.
FOUND 'EM HIDING OUT IN THE STRAW PILES.
R...
RAGNAR WAS RIGHT. FORTUNE HAS FORSAKEN YOU, ASKELADD...

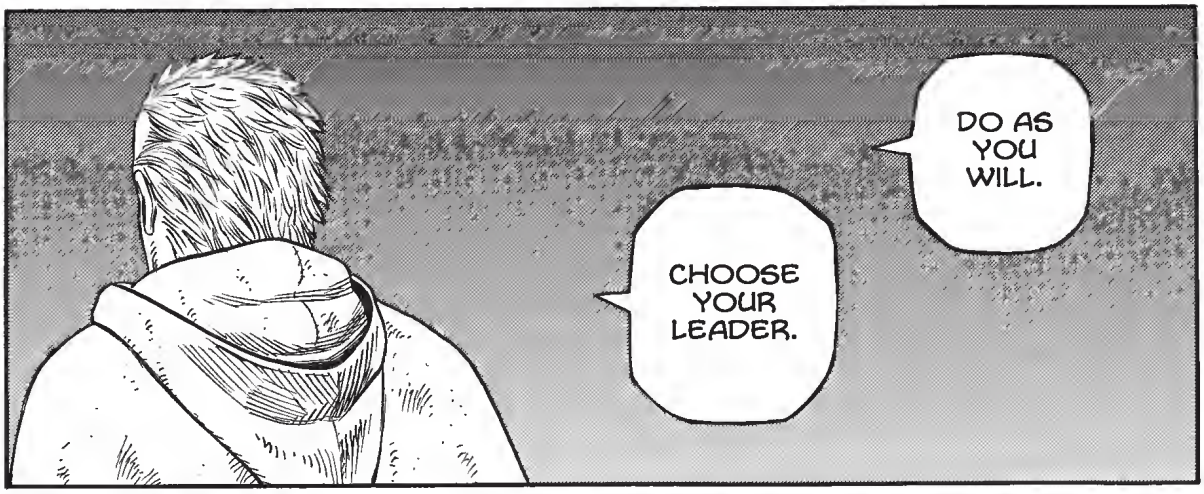
WE CAN'T TAKE OUR CHANCES THIS TIME. THORKELL'S GOT YOU IN HIS GRASP, DON'T YOU SEE?!
I AIN'T THE ONLY ONE... EVERYONE'S THINKIN' IT ON THE INSIDE.



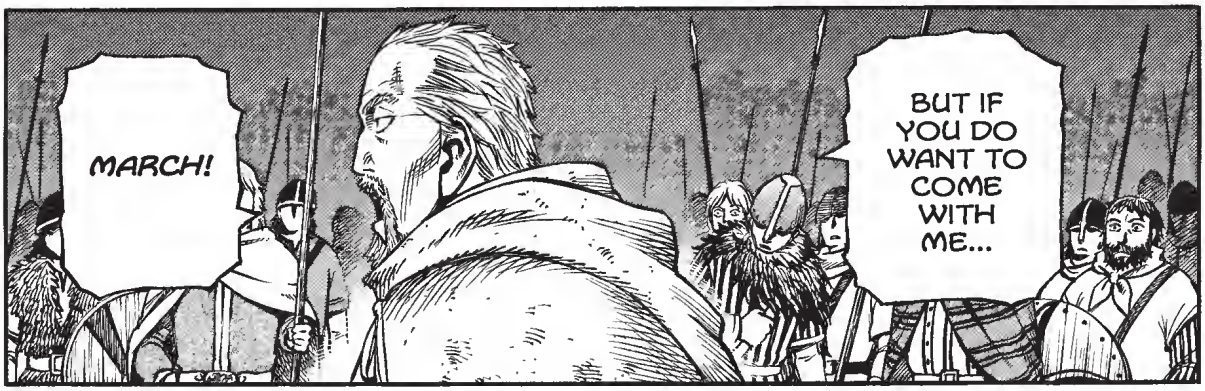


ZSHH...
AAH...


?!
ZSH
ZUSHH


DO AS YOU WILL.
CHOOSE YOUR LEADER.

SAME TO ALL OF YOU!
IF YOU WANT TO ABANDON ME, DO SO! I WILL NOT CURSE YOUR NAMES.


BUT IF YOU DO WANT TO COME WITH ME...
MARCH!

SWISH
MARCH UNTIL WE'VE THROWN THORKELL OFF OUR TAIL!
BRR-HRR
ZSHP
EAT AS YOU MARCH, AND SLEEP AS YOU MARCH!
MUTTER
ZSHK
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
ZSH
ZSHK
ZSH

CLANK
ZRUSH
ZSHK
KSHAK
HRP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
KEEP YOUR WITS ABOUT YOU! TO FALL BEHIND MEANS DEATH!!

CHAPTER 31 - END

THUDD
SHKK
W-WE'RE NOT WITH ASKELADD ANMORE!! WE'RE HERE TO JOIN YOUR SI...
WE GIVE UP!!
SAVE US!
WE SURRENDER!!
N-NO, STOP!! HEAR US OUT, THOR-KELL!!
BLRGH!
BCHOMP
SLURGHK
GYRK!

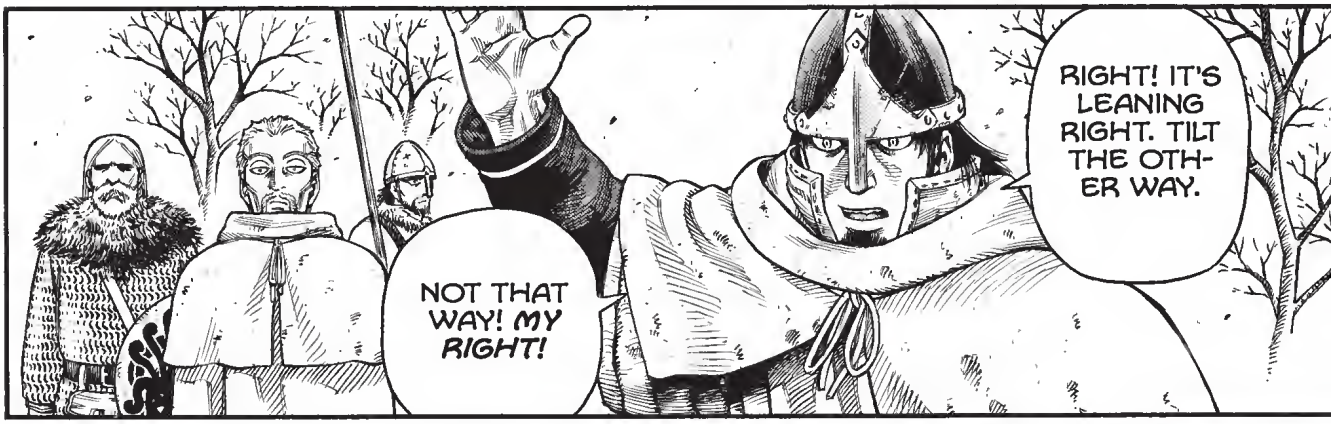
CHAPTER 32: DEFECTORS

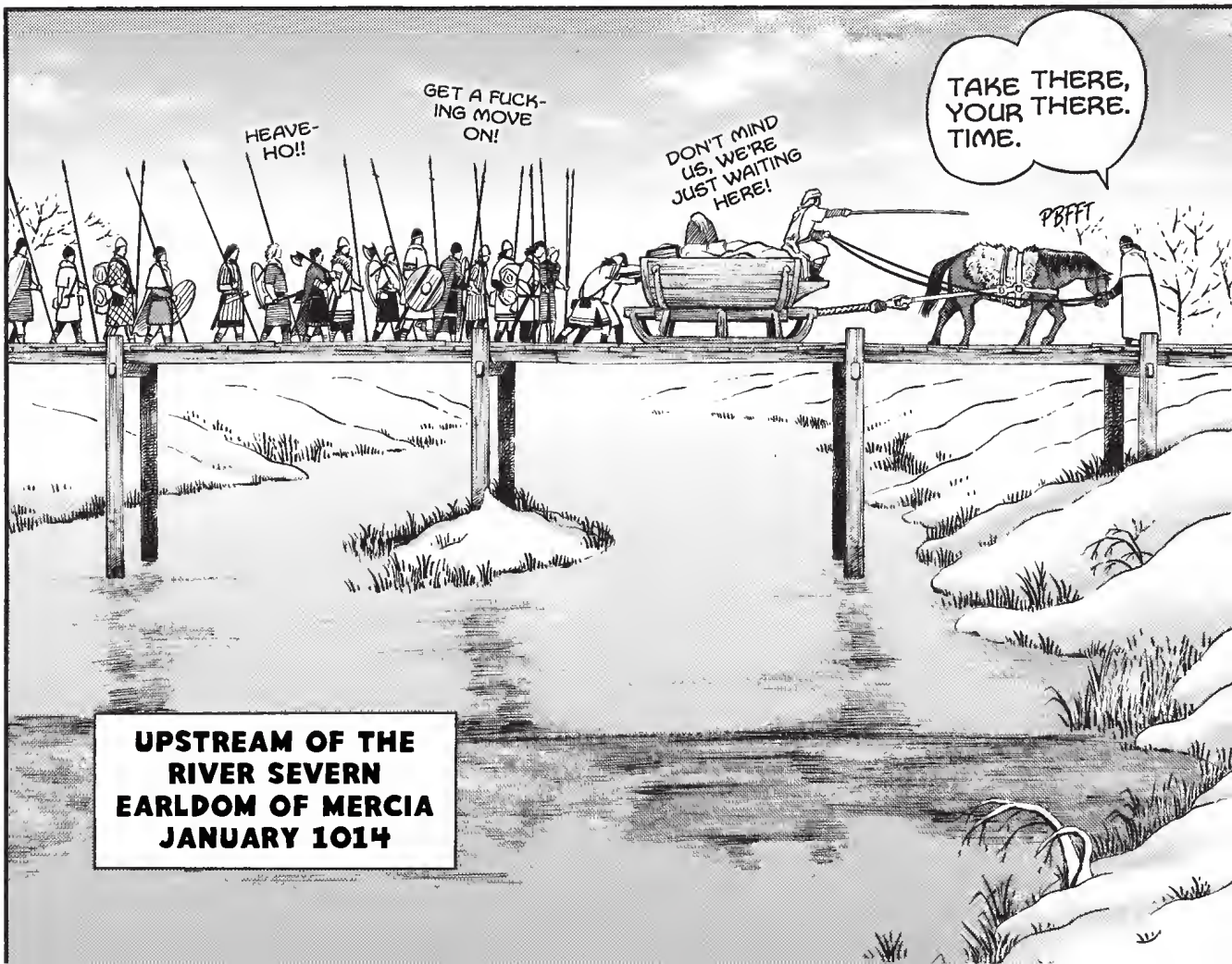
OOH, NICE SWORD.
IF HIS MEN ARE TRYING TO DESERT...
...THEY MUST BE PRETTY UNSETTLED.
AAAGH!
HNNG...
THEIR MAIN FORCE CAN'T BE FAR OFF YET.

AHH, THE POOR SODS.
WE COULD HAVE LET THEM JOIN US.
BETTER DEAD THAN AMONG US.
WE DON'T NEED COWARDS WHO WOULD FLIP SIDES AT THE FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE, RATHER THAN FIGHT LIKE MEN.

WE GO EAST!! LET'S HUNT OURSELVES A PRINCE, MEN!!
WE'LL RUN 'EM DOWN LIKE RATS !!!
RAHHHH!

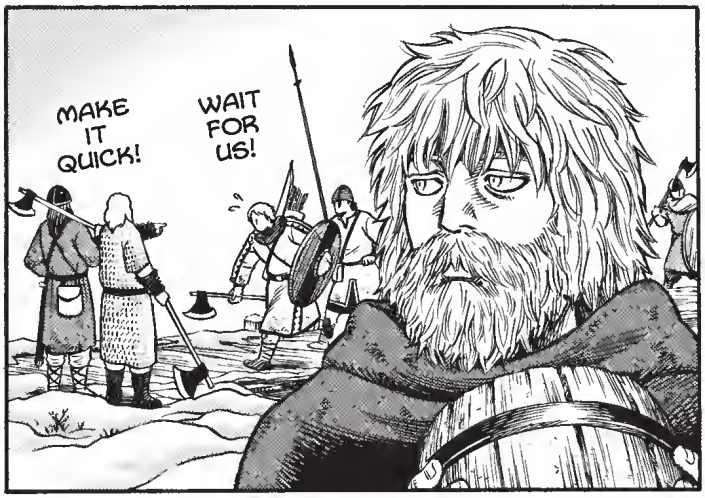
CREAK
CRKK...

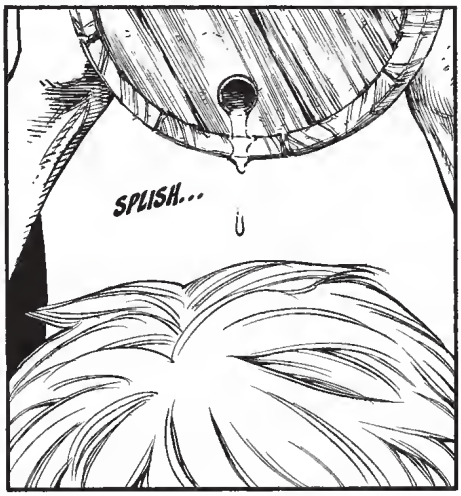

NOT THAT WAY! MY RIGHT!
RIGHT! IT'S LEANING RIGHT. TILT THE OTHER WAY.


HEAVE-HO!!
GET A FUCKING MOVE ON!
DON'T MIND US, WE'RE JUST WAITING HERE!
TAKE THERE, YOUR THERE. TIME.
PBFFT
UPSTREAM OF THE RIVER SEVERN
EARLDOM OF MERCIA
JANUARY 1014

AYE.
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
CRSH
CREAK
CRKK
TORGRIM! ATLI! UP HERE!
WE'RE TAKING DOWN THE BRIDGE BEHIND US. YOU'RE IN CHARGE.
MAKE IT QUICK.
ON IT.
IS THOR-KELL CLOSE, EAR?
HARD TO TELL WITH ALL THE NOISE...
...BUT I'M GUESSING WE HAVE TIME TO SMASH THE BRIDGE.

AYE!
ANYONE WITH AN AXE, YOU'RE HELPING OUT!
WE'RE DIS-MANTLING THIS BRIDGE!
SO TIRED.

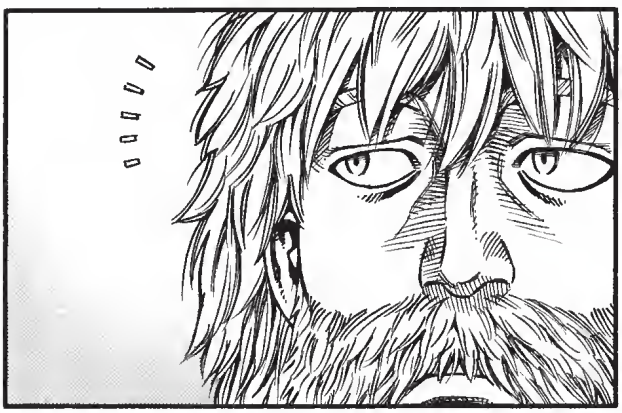

MAKE IT QUICK!
WAIT FOR US!

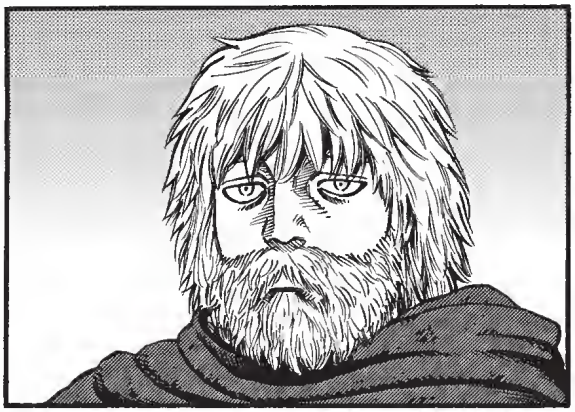

SPLISH...

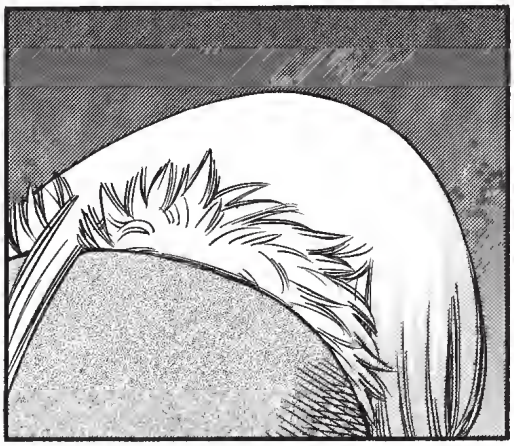
IS THERE DRINK IN HERE?
IF THERE IS, YOU WON'T BE GETTIN' ANY.

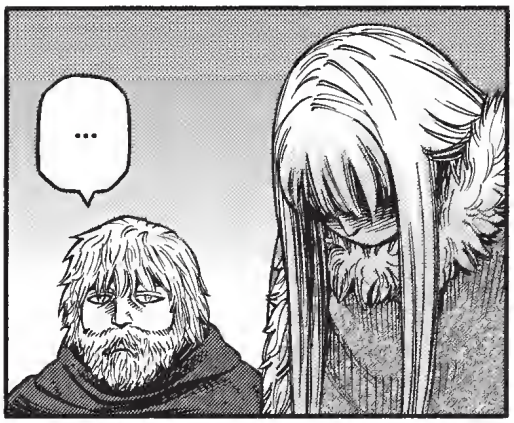
HEY!
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA, NOT SO FAST, FRIAR!
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
RUSTLE RASSLE

DON'T YOU SEE? WE'RE IN A BIT OF TROUBLE HERE, PRIEST!
WE'VE HARDLY ENOUGH FOR THE REST OF US, MUCH LESS YOU.

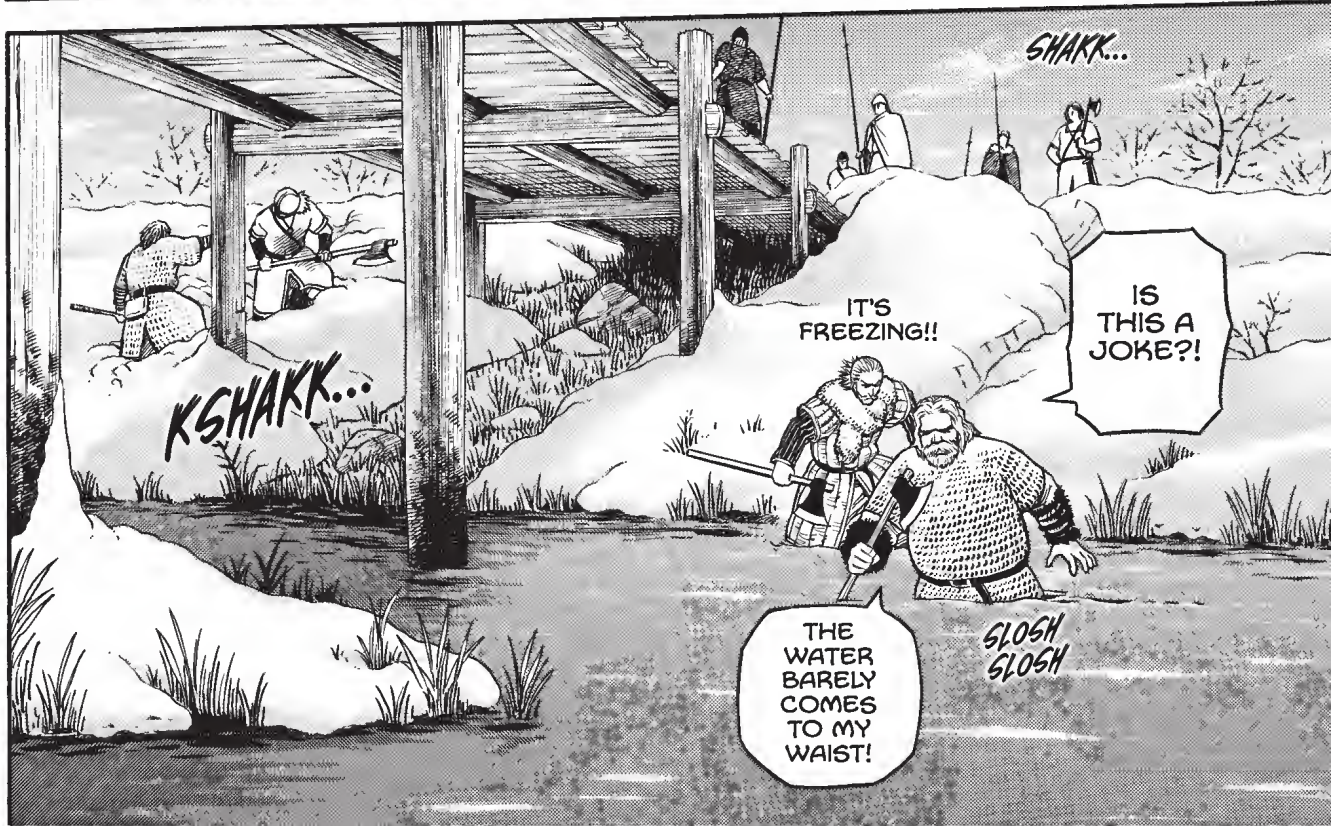


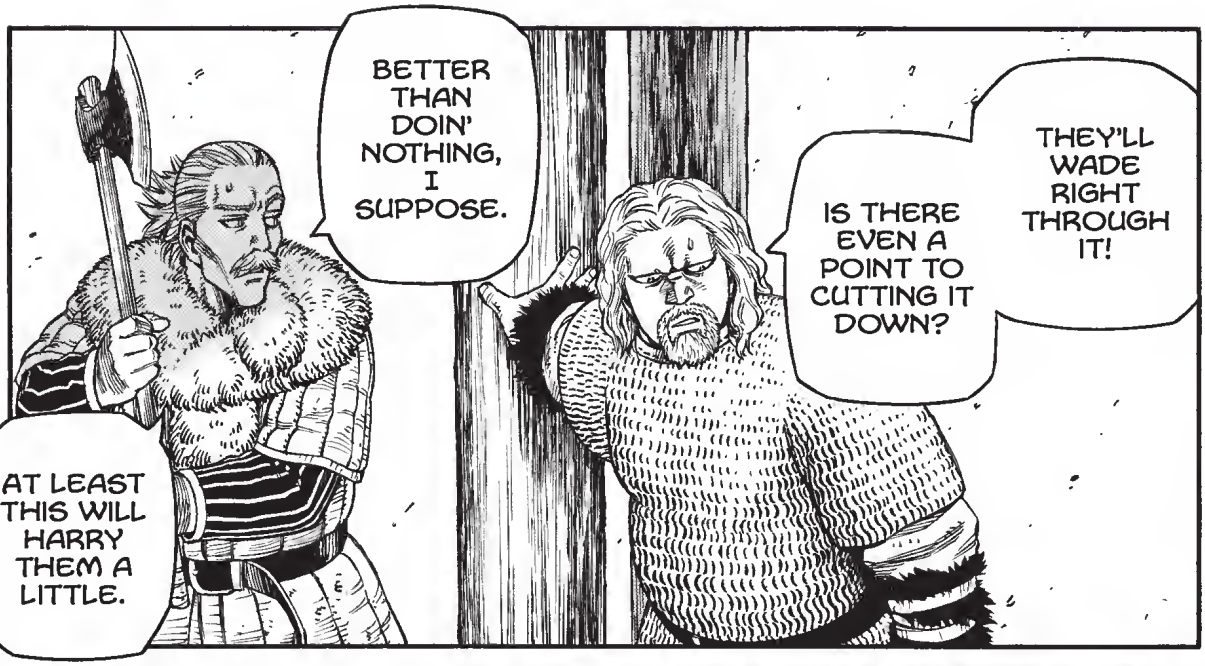


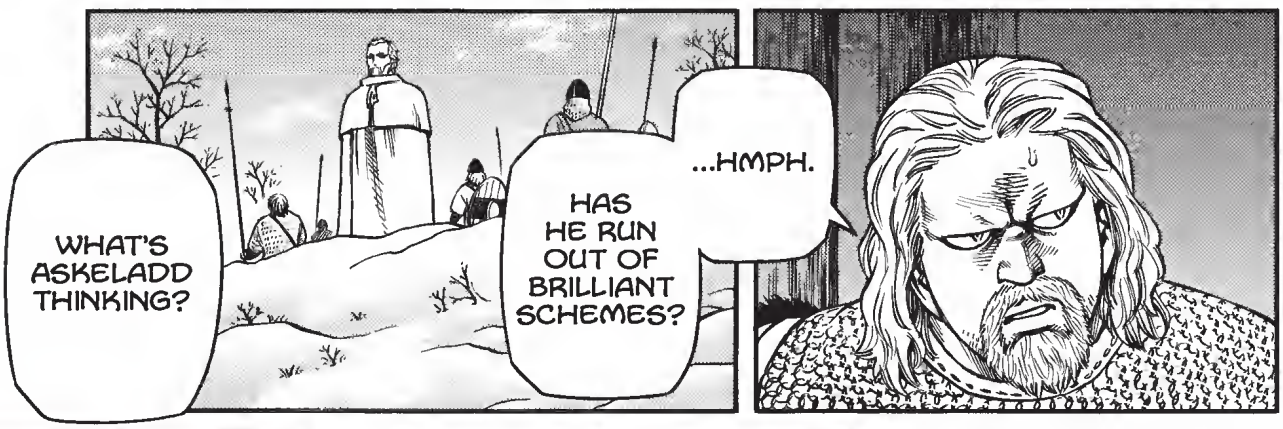


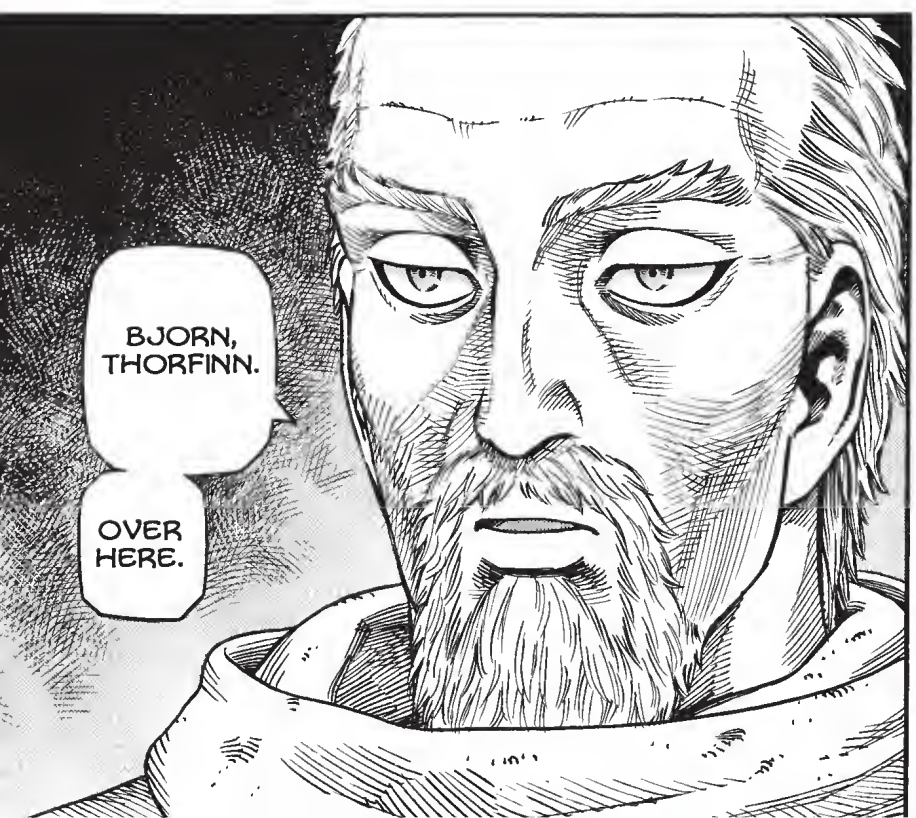

...

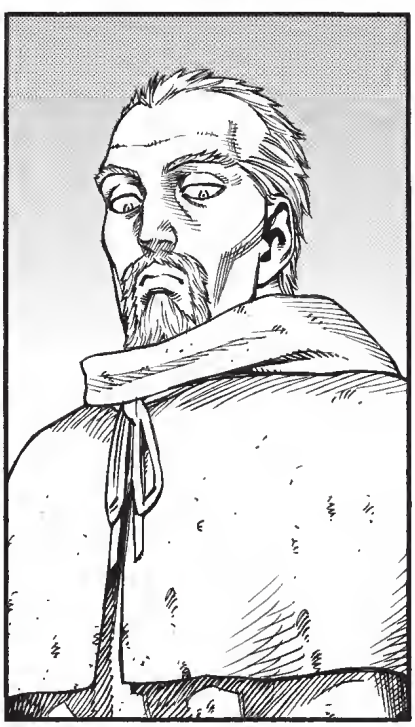
SHHUNK

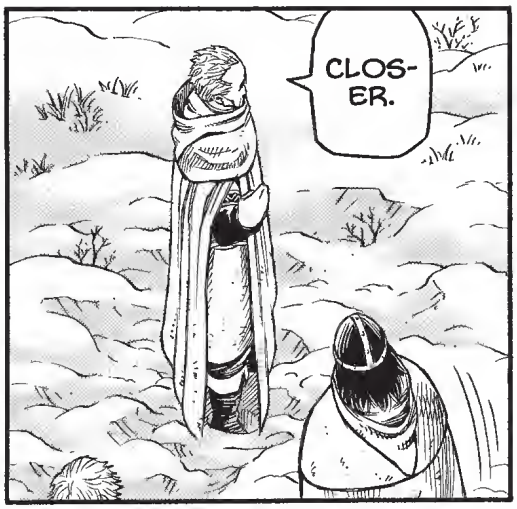

SHAKK...
IS THIS A JOKE?!
IT'S FREEZING!!
KSHAKK...
THE WATER BARELY COMES TO MY WAIST!
SLOSH SLOSH

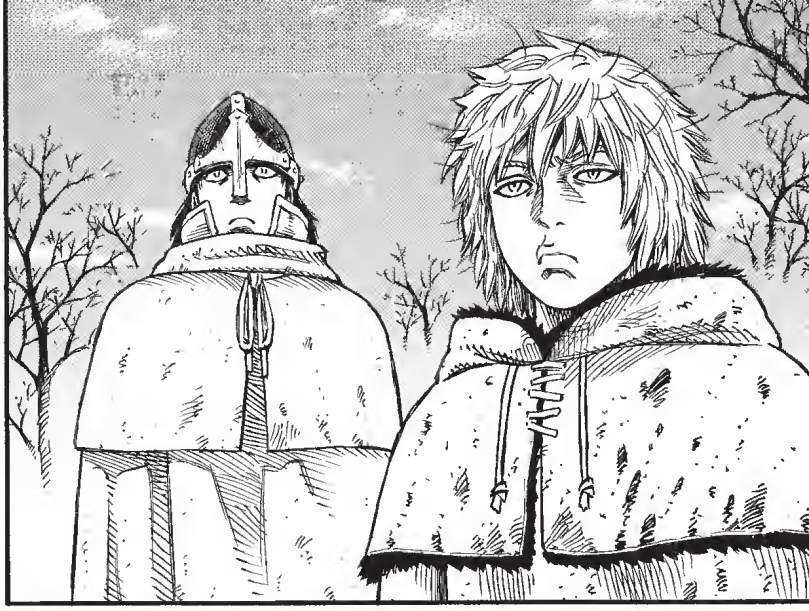

BETTER THAN DOIN' NOTHING, I SUPPOSE.
THEY'LL WADE RIGHT THROUGH IT!
IS THERE EVEN A POINT TO CUTTING IT DOWN?
AT LEAST THIS WILL HARRY THEM A LITTLE.

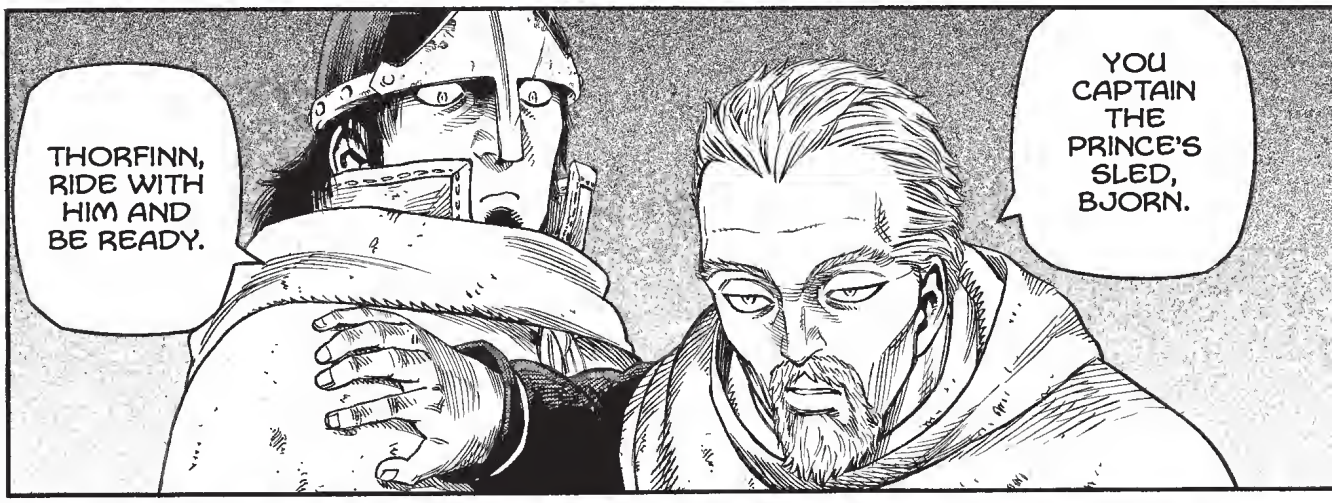

WHAT'S ASKELADD THINKING?
HAS HE RUN OUT OF BRILLIANT SCHEMES?
...HMPH.


BJORN, THORFINN.
OVER HERE.




CLOS-
ER.

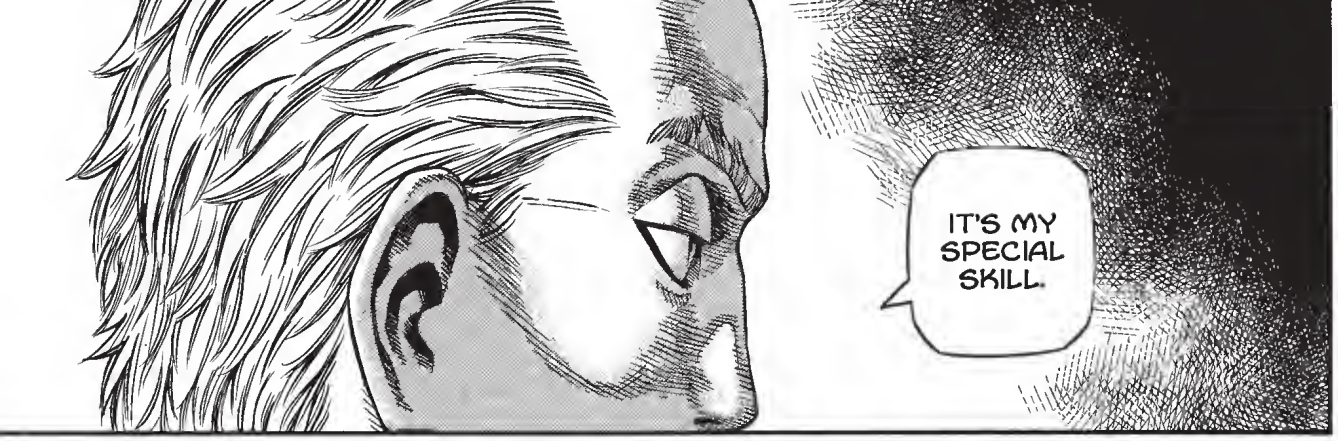



THORFINN, RIDE WITH HIM AND BE READY.
YOU CAPTAIN THE PRINCE'S SLED, BJORN.

ASKELADD... ARE YOU CERTAIN...?

!!
NO...

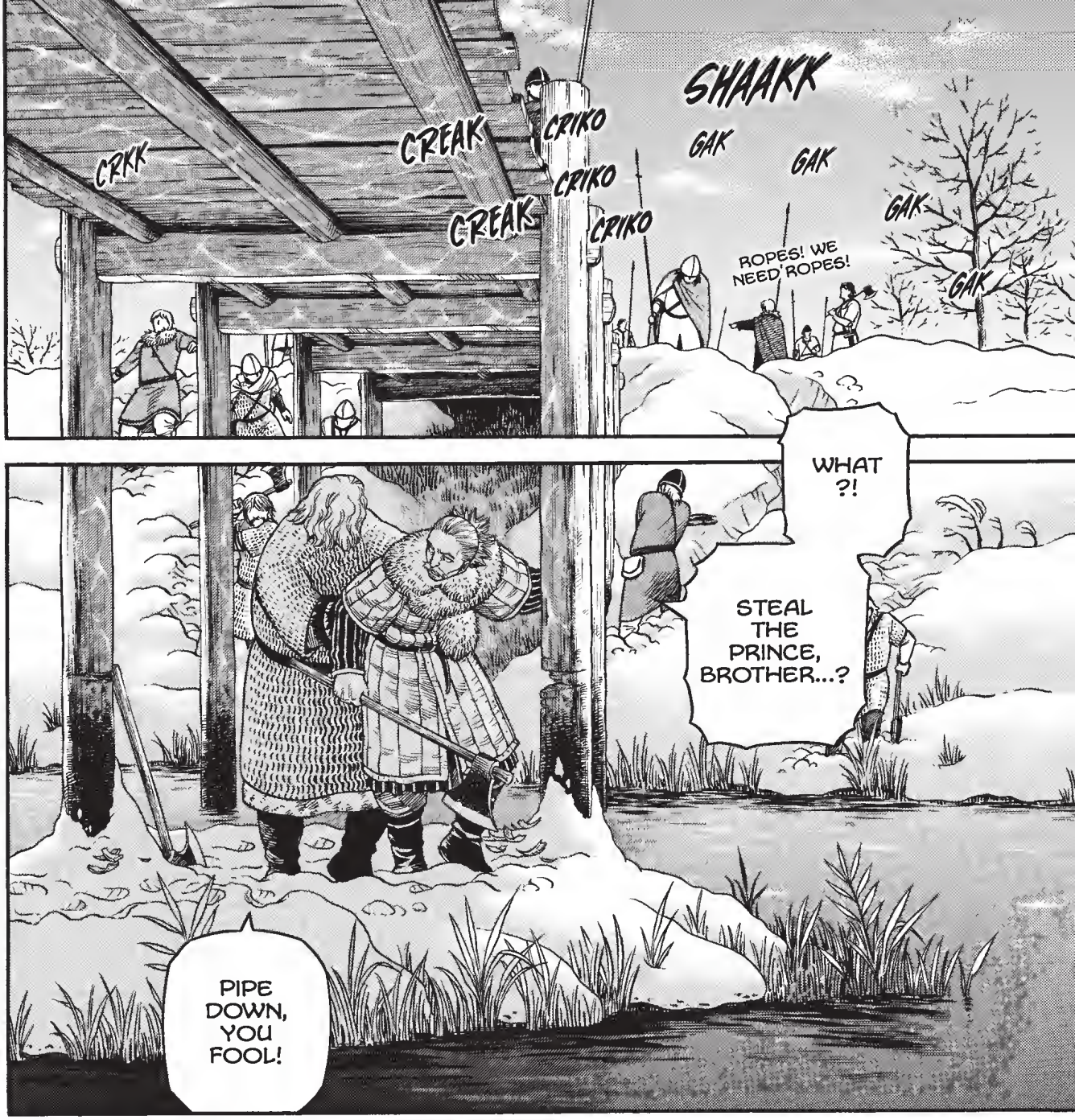
?
WHA ...?

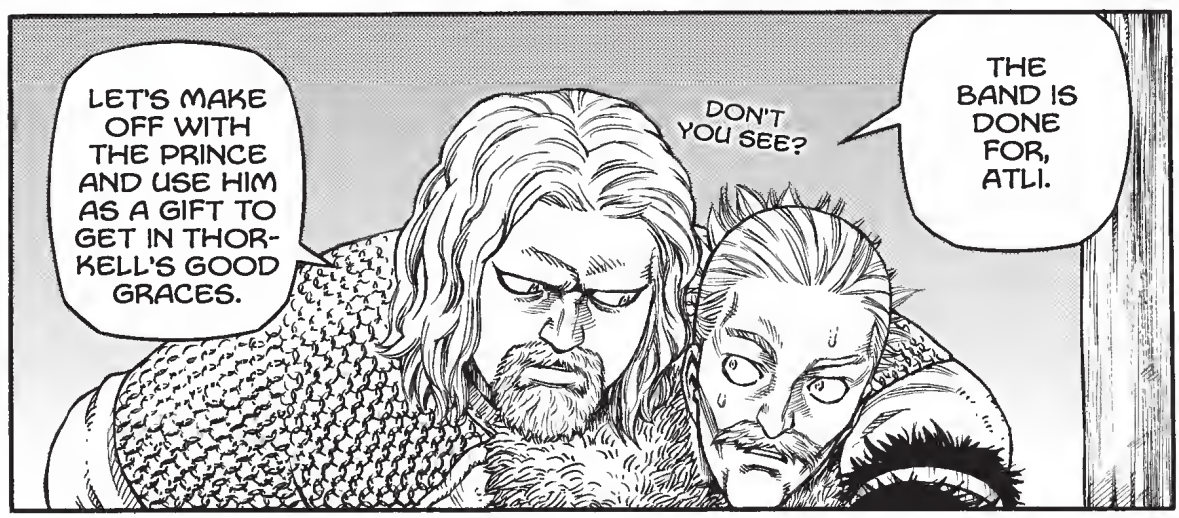

IT'S MY SPECIAL SKILL.

ONE LOOK IS ALL I NEED...
...TO KNOW A MAN'S TRUE NATURE.

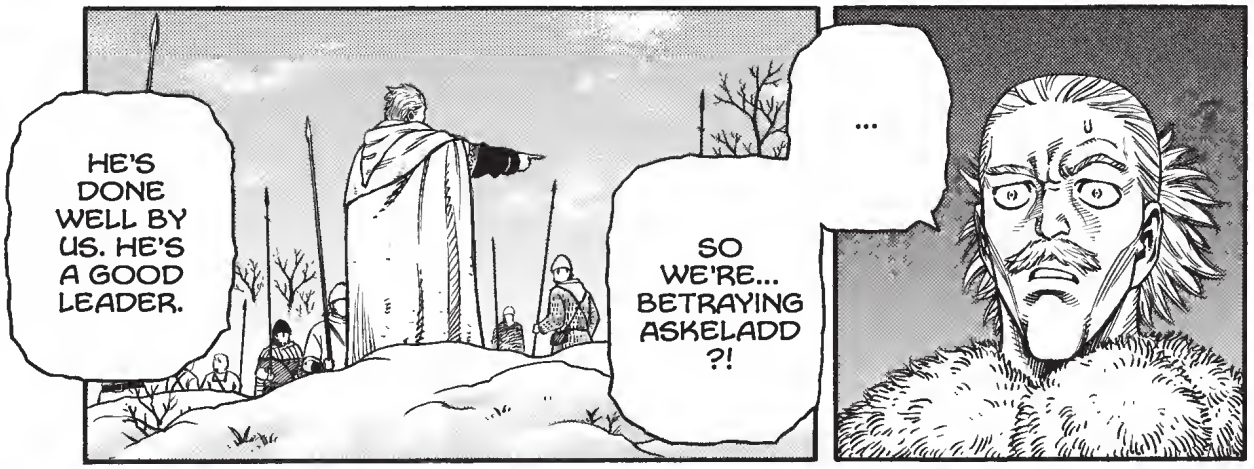
WHETHER HE IS GREAT OR SMALL...
CUNNING OR FOOL-ISH...

I CAN EVEN DETECT...
...WHEN TRAITORS LURK IN THE MIDST OF THE FAITHFUL.

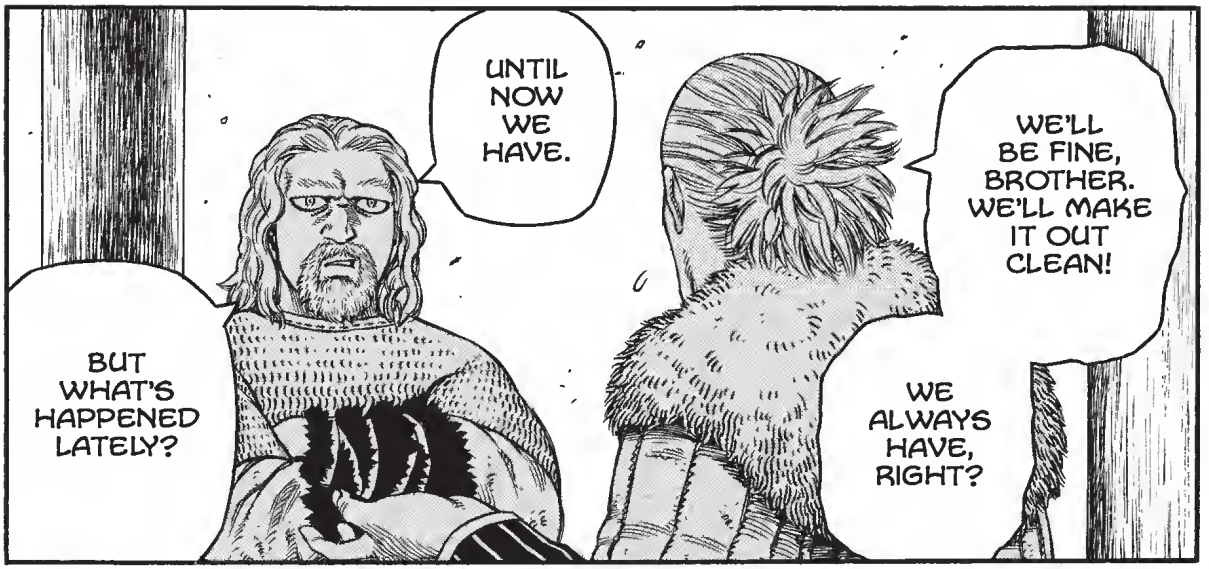

CRKK
CREAK
CRIKO
CRIKO
CREAK
CRIKO
SHAAKK
GAK
GAK
GAK
GAK
ROPES! WE NEED ROPES!
WHAT ?!
STEAL THE PRINCE, BROTHER...?
PIPE DOWN, YOU FOOL!

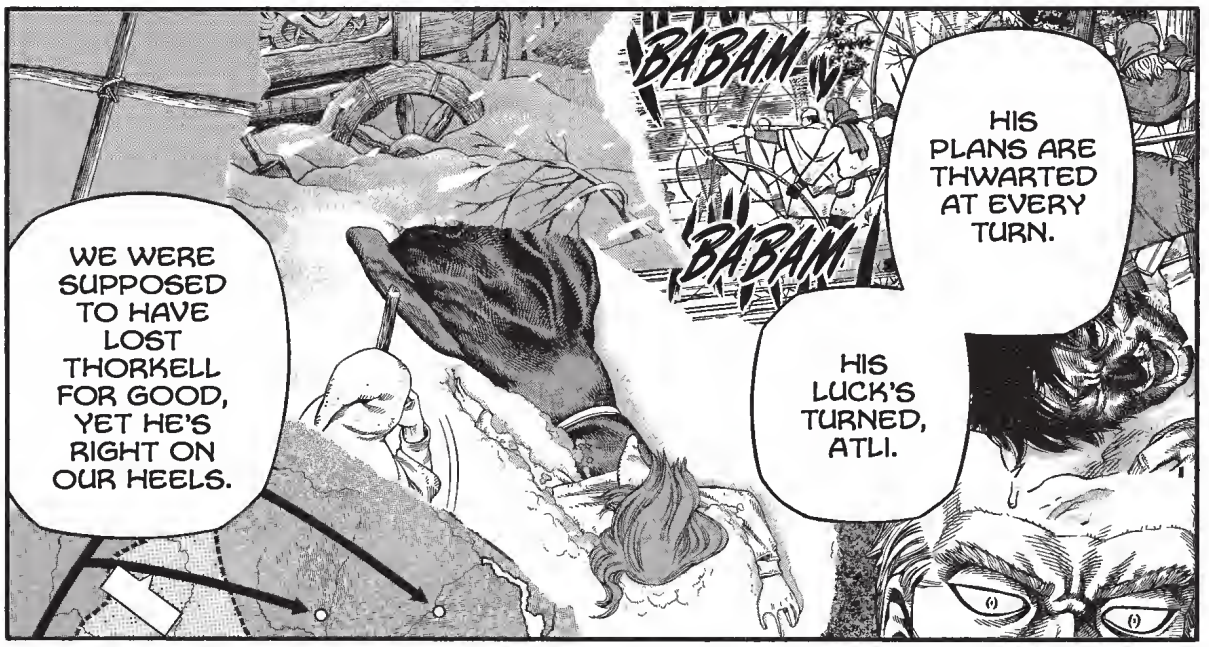

LET'S MAKE OFF WITH THE PRINCE AND USE HIM AS A GIFT TO GET IN THOR-KELL'S GOOD GRACES.
DON'T YOU SEE?
THE BAND IS DONE FOR, ATLI.

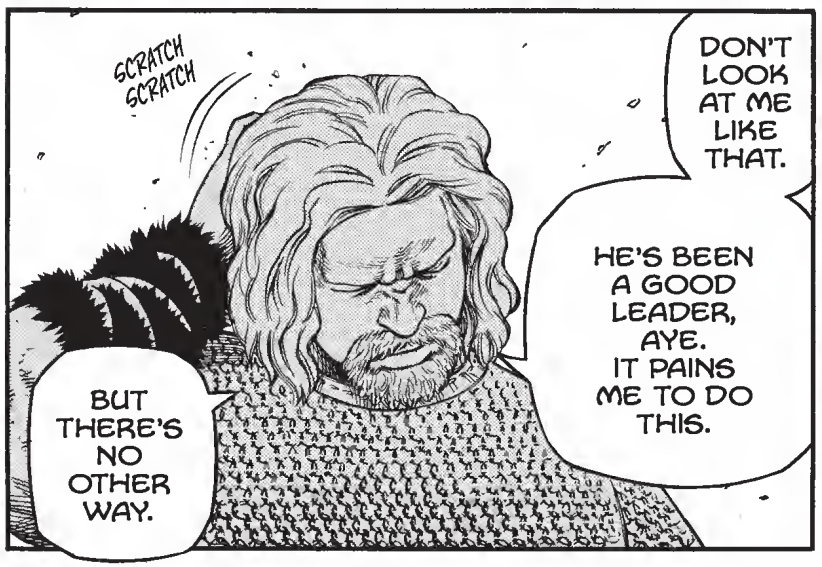
MORE THAN HALF THE MEN ARE ON OUR SIDE IN THIS.
AND THE REST WILL SEE SENSE VERY SOON.


...
SO WE'RE... BETRAYING ASKELADD ?!
HE'S DONE WELL BY US. HE'S A GOOD LEADER.

"BETRAYAL" IS SUCH A DIRTY WORD, ATLI.
ALL WE'RE DOING IS *HOLDING HIM RESPONSIBLE*...
...FOR HIS ACTIONS AS CHIEF OF THE BAND.


UNTIL NOW WE HAVE.
WE'LL BE FINE, BROTHER. WE'LL MAKE IT OUT CLEAN!
BUT WHAT'S HAPPENED LATELY?
WE ALWAYS HAVE, RIGHT?

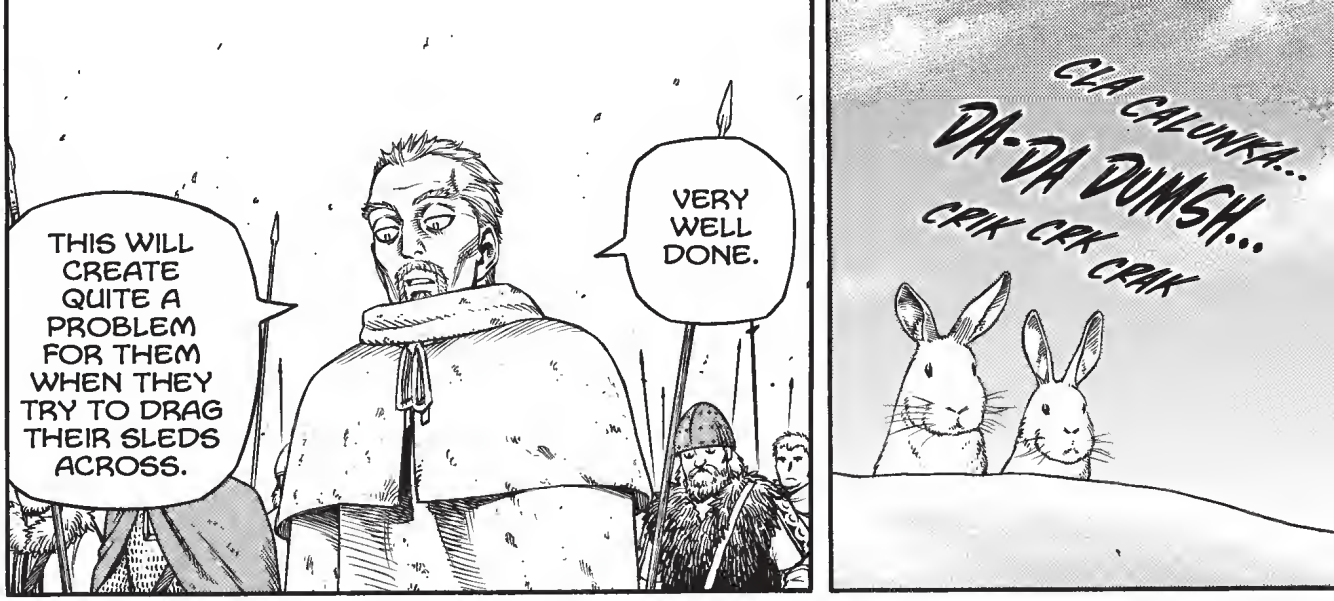

BABAM
BABAM
HIS PLANS ARE THWARTED AT EVERY TURN.
WE WERE SUPPOSED TO HAVE LOST THORKELL FOR GOOD, YET HE'S RIGHT ON OUR HEELS.
HIS LUCK'S TURNED, ATLI.


SCRATCH SCRATCH
DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT.
HE'S BEEN A GOOD LEADER, AYE. IT PAINS ME TO DO THIS.
BUT THERE'S NO OTHER WAY.

...

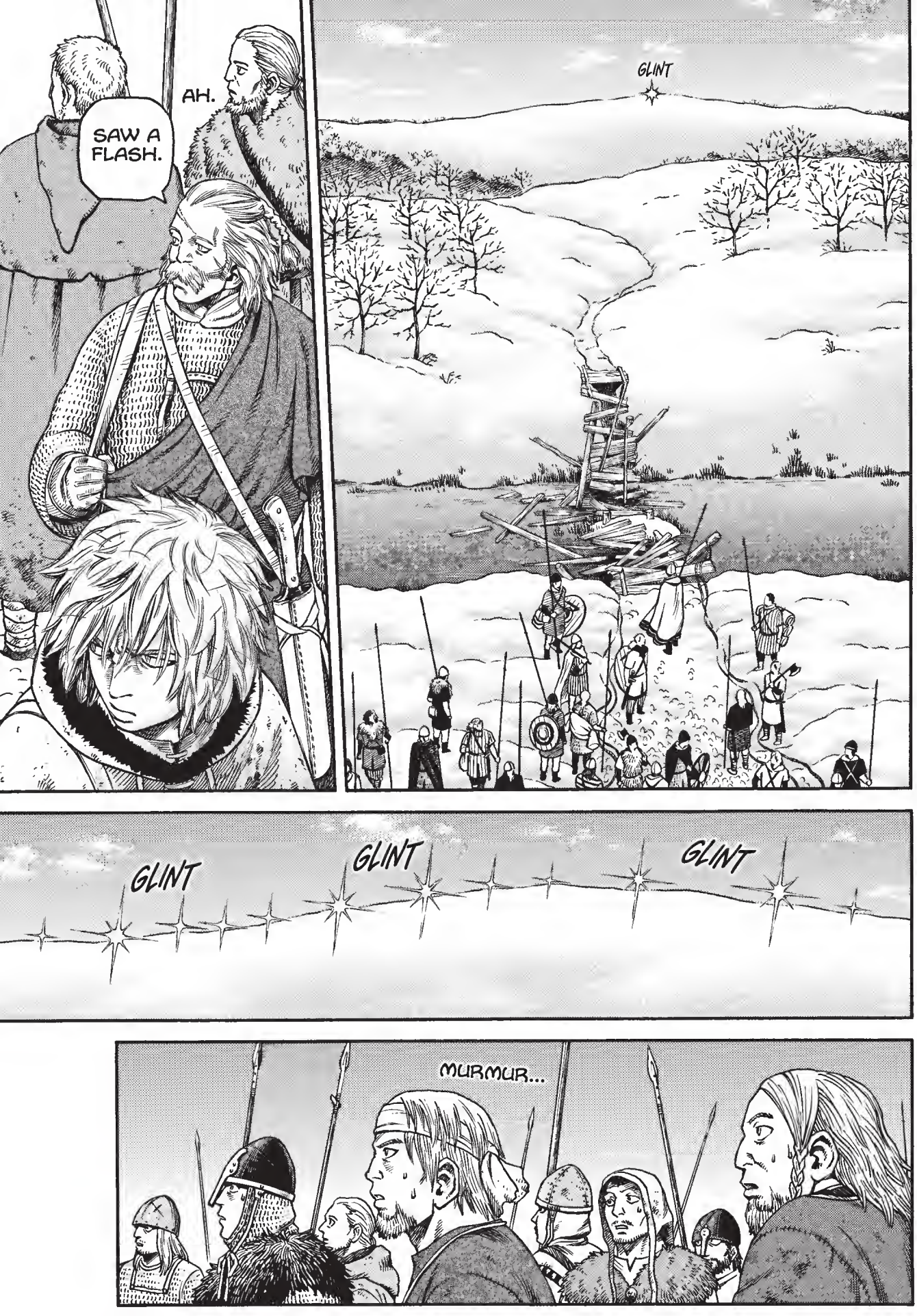
ASKELADD TOOK HIS GAMBLE, AND HE LOST.
THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT.

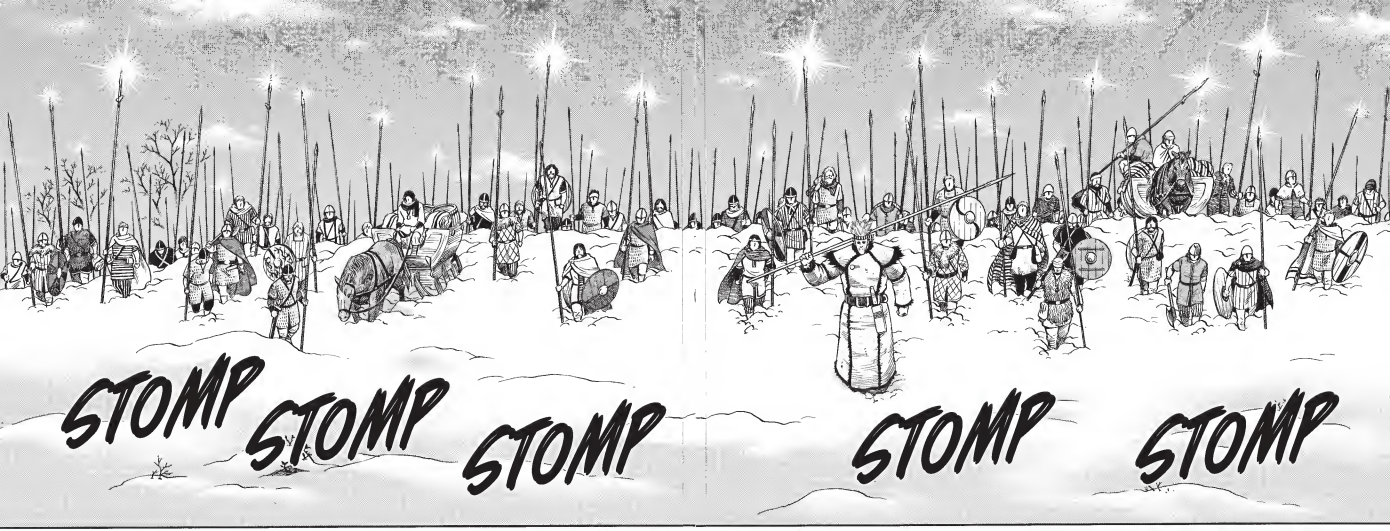
...DECIDE TO TAKE ON A MONSTER LIKE THORKELL?
IT DOES SEEM MIGHTY ODD, THOUGH.
WHY WOULD SUCH A CAUTIOUS MAN...


VERY WELL DONE.
THIS WILL CREATE QUITE A PROBLEM FOR THEM WHEN THEY TRY TO DRAG THEIR SLEDS ACROSS.
CLA CALUNKA...
DA-DA DUMSH...
CRIK CRK CRAK

WHAT IF THEY JUST LEAVE 'EM BEHIND?
IT'LL FORCE THEM TO SPEND TIME SCROUNG-ING UP FOOD.
AND THEY WON'T GET FAR ON EMPTY BELLIES.

THEY'RE HERE!!
AYE-AYE...
SO TIRED...
I JUST WANT A REST...
RESUME MARCH!!


AH.
SAW A FLASH.
GLINT
GLINT
GLINT
GLINT
MURMUR...


STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP

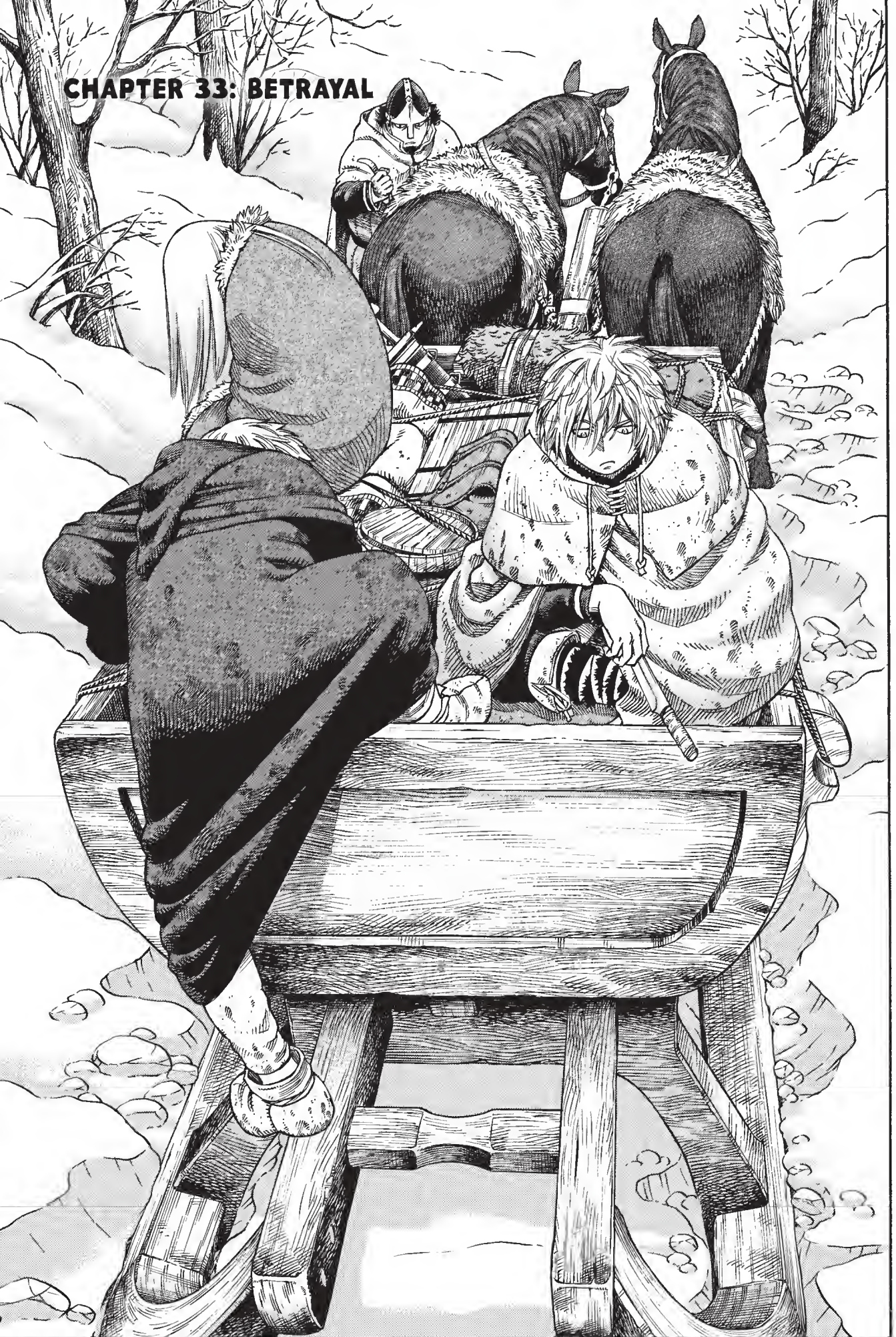
YOU !!!
DYUMM

I FOUUUU-UUUND...

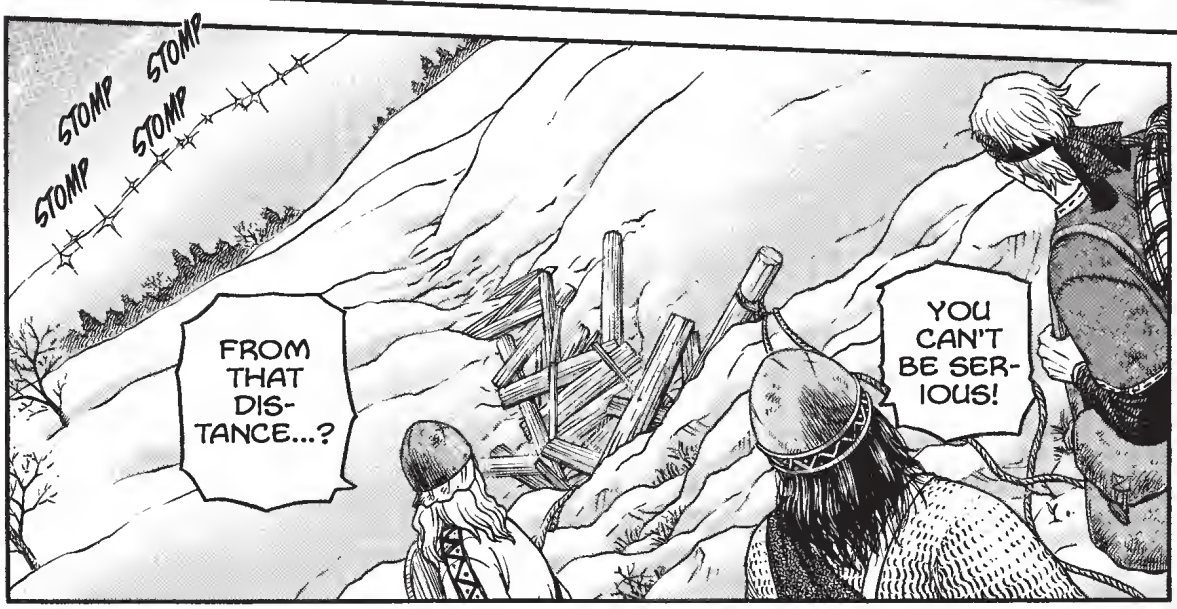
VMMM
DRSSHHHK

CHAPTER 32 - END

CHAPTER 33: BETRAYAL



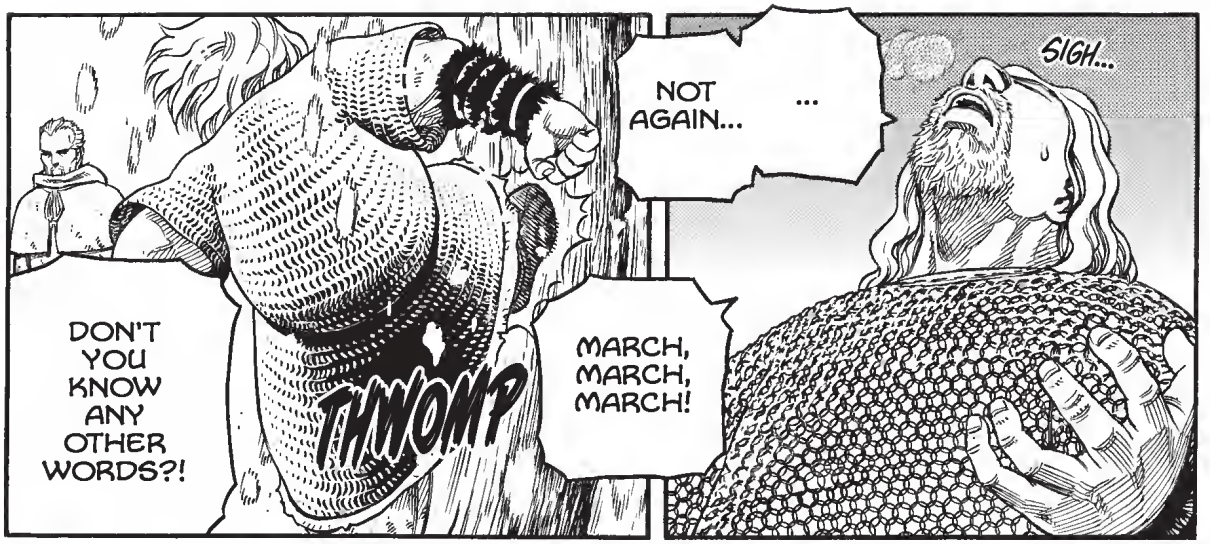
A SPEAR ?!
WHA —?!
WHAT... WHAT JUST—?!
GHK...
OGH...

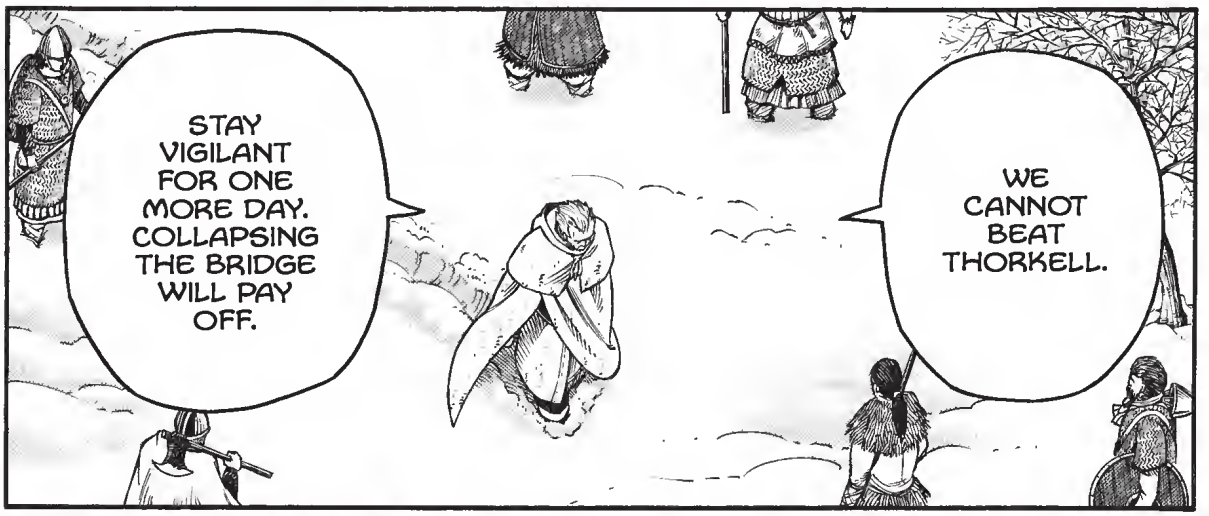

STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
FROM THAT DIS-TANCE...?
YOU CAN'T BE SER-IOUS!

HE'S A MON-STER !!
WE'RE FUCKED!!
...OH SHIT...
SHIT, SHIT, SHIT!

THEY'RE STILL IN THE DISTANCE, AND THE BRIDGE IS DOWN.
FORGET ABOUT THE DAMNED SPEAR.
CALM YOUR-SELVES, YOU FOOLS!

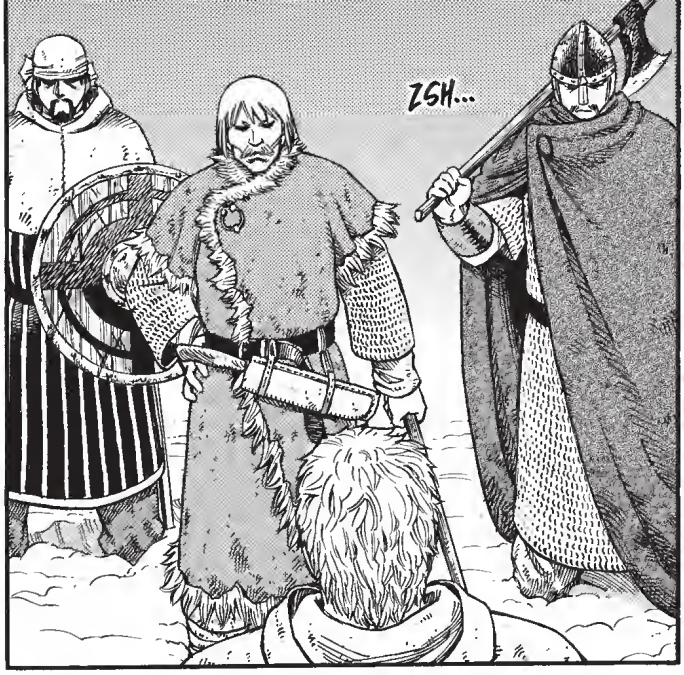
YOU THINK SO?
THEN WE'D BETTER STOP WASTING TIME AND GET MARCHING.
THEY'LL WALK RIGHT THROUGH THE STREAM! THIS ENTIRE RUSE WAS POINTLESS!
BRIDGE?! WHO CARES ABOUT THE BRIDGE?!


SIGH...
NOT AGAIN... ...
MARCH, MARCH, MARCH!
THWOMP
DON'T YOU KNOW ANY OTHER WORDS?!


WE CANNOT BEAT THORKELL.
STAY VIGILANT FOR ONE MORE DAY. COLLAPSING THE BRIDGE WILL PAY OFF.

THEY'LL ONLY MOVE AS FAST AS THEY CAN MOVE THEIR SUPPLIES.
EVEN IF THEY LEAVE THEIR PROVISIONS BEHIND TO CONTINUE THEIR PURSUIT, THEY'LL ONLY LAST A DAY AT MOST WITHOUT FOOD.
THE RIVER WILL SLOW THORKELL'S PROGRESS.

IS THAT CLEAR?
NOW MARCH.
...
THERE'S NO GUARANTEE THAT WE'LL SURVIVE A DAY.
I WON'T WASTE TIME TRYING TO CONVINCE YOU.
...I SEE.
THEN THIS IS WHERE WE PART WAYS.
SPIN...

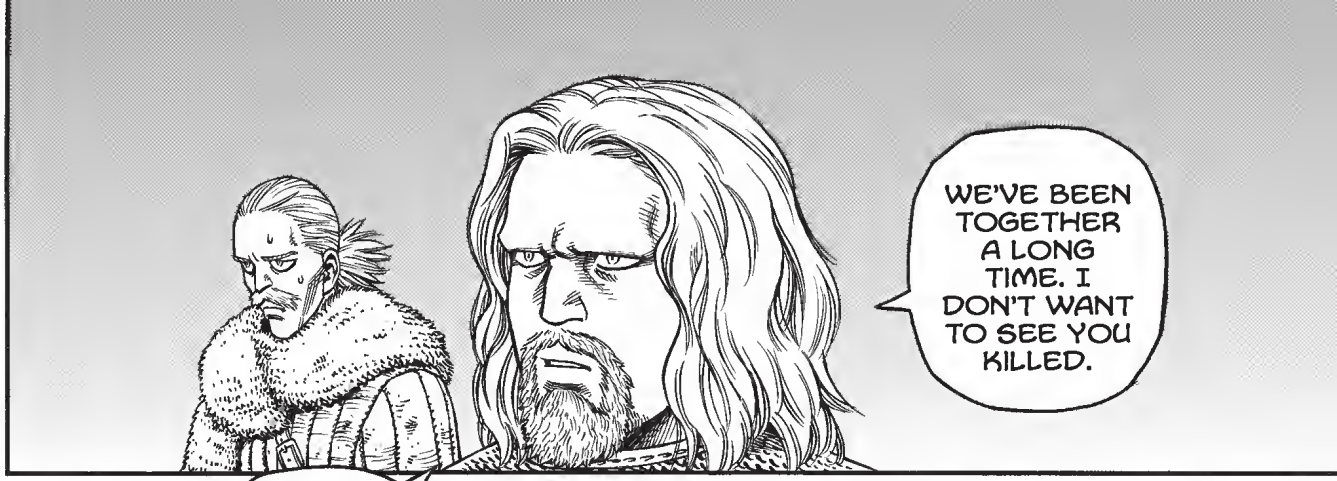

ZSH...

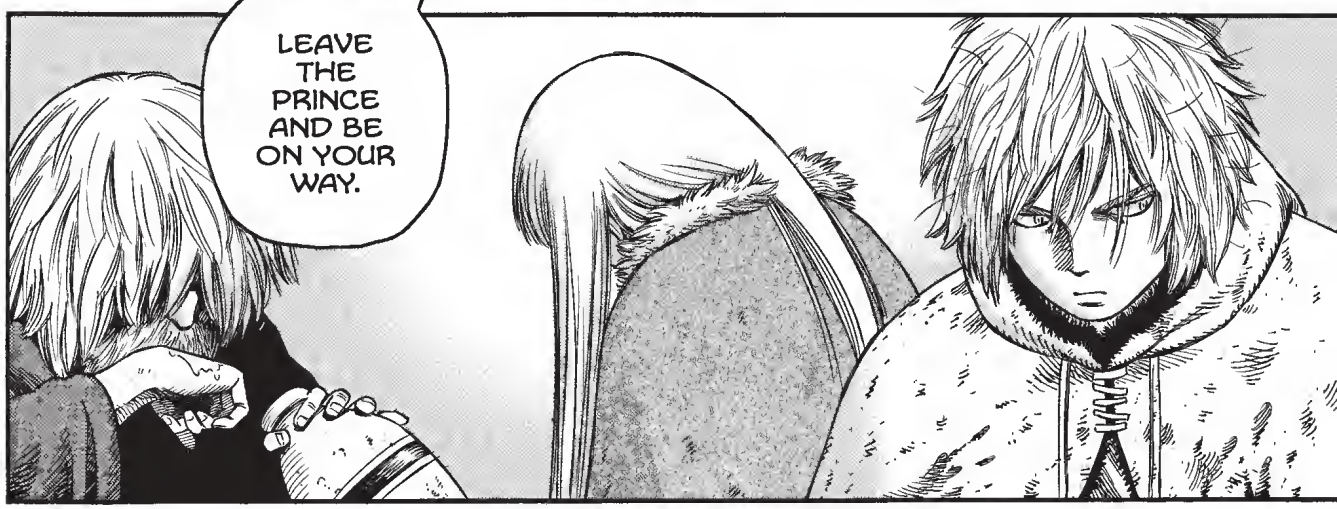
ZSH...
SHUKK...

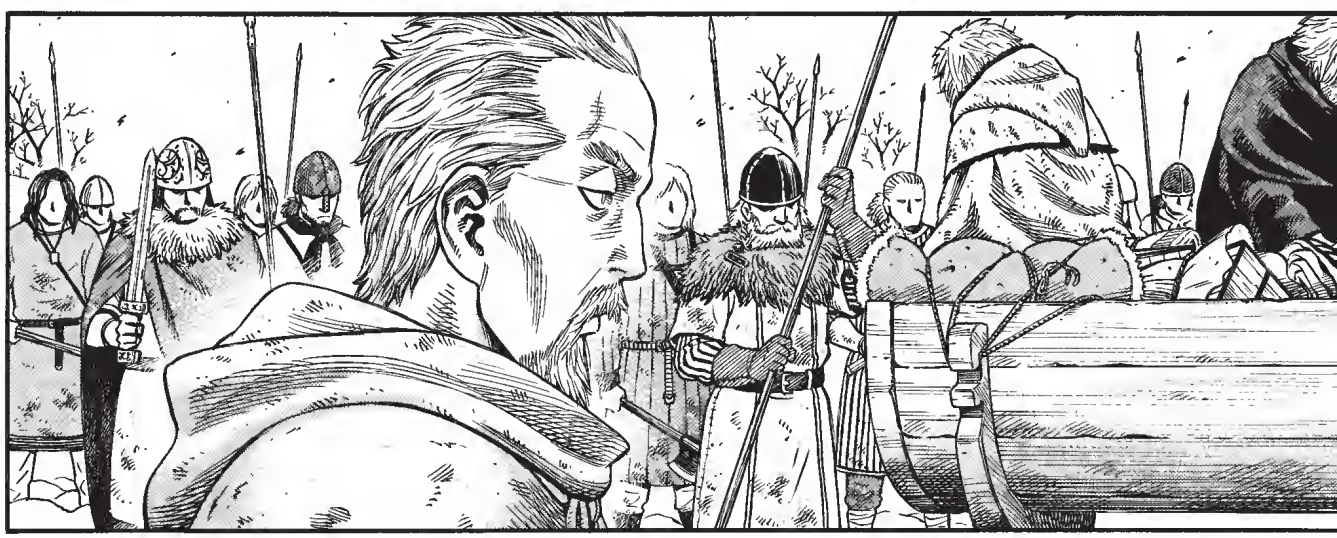
SLUSH...
CLANK...
ZSHH...

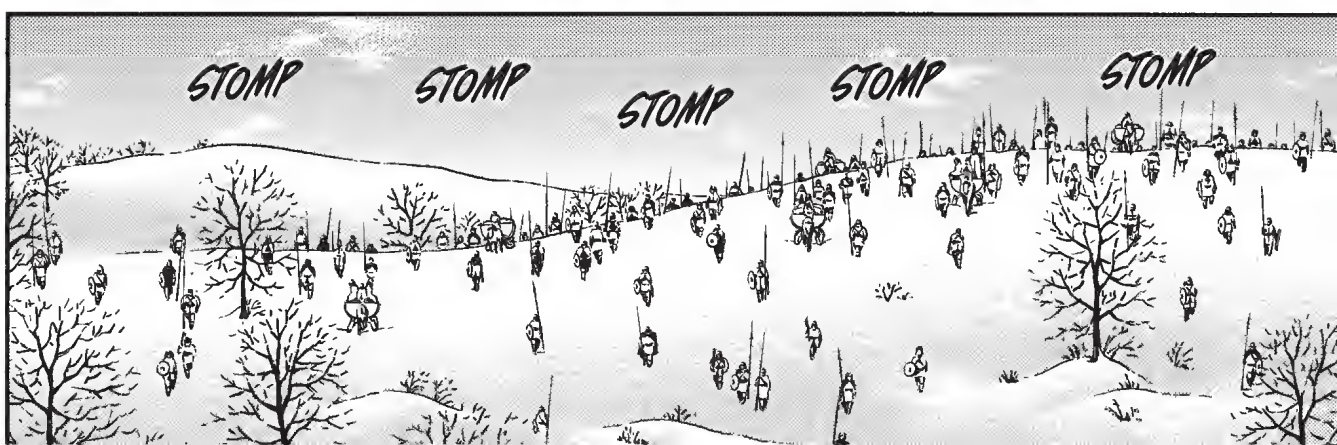
PBFFT...

HUFF...
SIGH...
IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE, STAY HERE AND WASH YOUR ASSES IN THE RIVER.
PRESENT YOUR-SELVES TO THORKELL AND BE DONE WITH IT.
DON'T GET CUTE WITH ME, YOU THUGS.
LOOK, ASKE-LADD...
THE ONLY ARSE THAT MONSTER WANTS IS THE PRINCE'S.


WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER A LONG TIME. I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU KILLED.


LEAVE THE PRINCE AND BE ON YOUR WAY.




STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP

BEFORE WE PART...
MAY I JUST SAY ONE THING?
SIGH...
YOU AND I...
...HAVE BEEN THROUGH THIS LIFE FOR YEARS.
WE'VE LAUGHED TOGETHER, DRUNK TOGETHER...
...AND FOUGHT OUR WAY THROUGH COUNTLESS BATTLES TOGETHER.
AND ALTHOUGH WE'VE BEEN A BAND FOR WELL OVER A DECADE...
...THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE NEVER SAID THAT YOU DESERVE TO HEAR.

I'VE HATED EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU...
...WITH EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING.
YOU STINKING, PIGFUCKING DANISH WHORESONS.

WHA?
MM?
...

SHKK
ZASH

SHIT !!
GRAB THE PRINCE !!
!!
THOR-FINN !!
DSHH
HMPH.
ZWIP

SWOOSH
HRK
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK
GAAGH
AARK
THUNK
THUNK

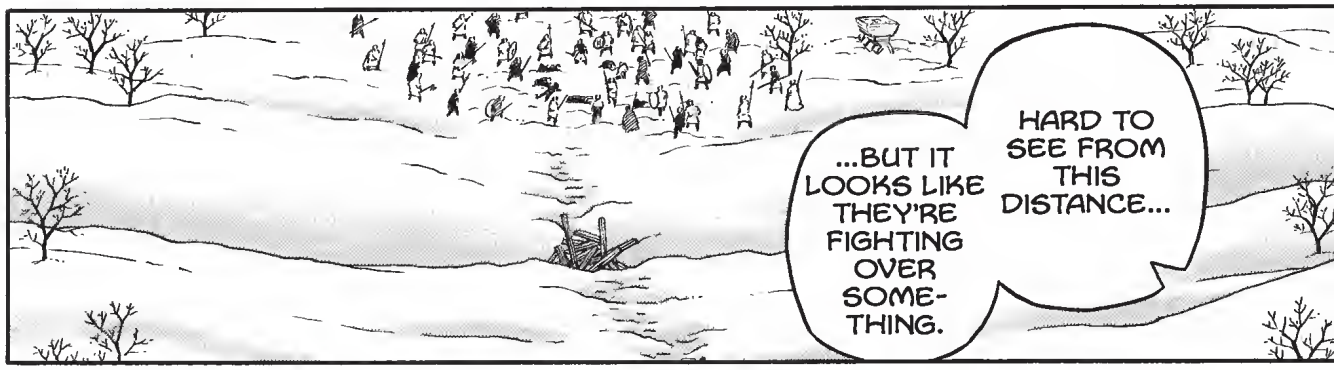
WHOOSH
HERE WE GO!!
HANG ON TIGHT, BOYS !!
SNAK
SNAK
HNEE
HEE
HNEEEE
DWAH!

DADUM DADUM
AFTER THEM !!
HE SAW THIS COMING!!
SHIT !!
AAGH! MY EYE!
DADUM
GO, GO, GO, GO!!
HNEE-HEEEE
DON'T LET THEM GET AWAY!!

UH-OH.
NOT SO...
...FAST!
VMMM
GSHK
WHOA!
IGNORE HIM!! GET THE SLED!!
DADUM
DADUM
DADUM
GO, GO!

WELL.
LET'S SEE...
DAMN.
I TRAINED THEM TOO WELL.
DADUM
DADUM
OHHHH
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
I GUESS I JUST DIDN'T PRAY ENOUGH.
THIS IS QUITE A PICKLE.

MMM-MMM-MM...
MMH?

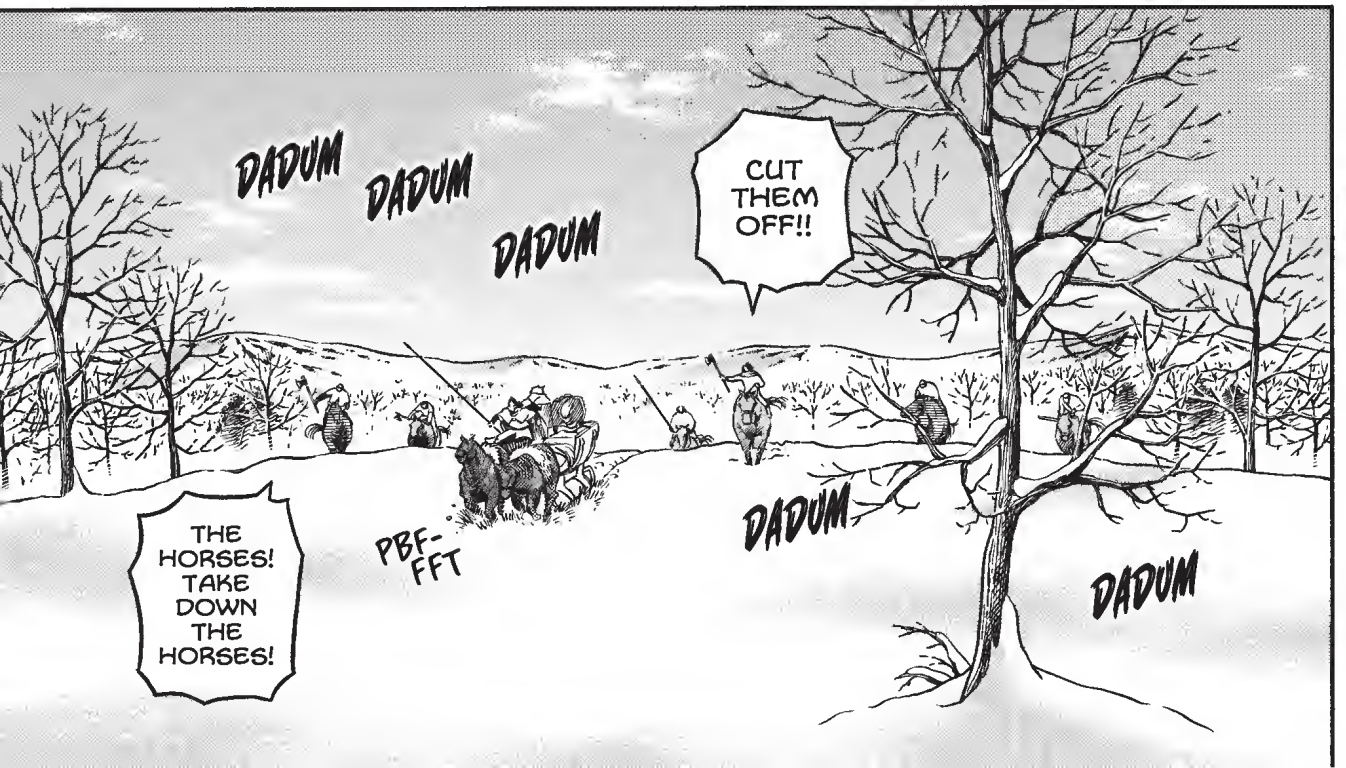

...BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE FIGHTING OVER SOME-THING.
HARD TO SEE FROM THIS DISTANCE...

THIS IS OUTRA-GEOUS!
HARRUMPH!!!
PATHETIC. EVERYONE'S AFRAID TO DIE THESE DAYS.
HA HA HAAA! ARE THEY SERIOUS?

STOMP
THEY'RE TURN-ING ON EACH OTHER.
HAPPENS A LOT WHEN YOUR BACK'S AGAINST THE WALL.
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP

WAIT FOR MEEE!!
RAHHH!
HOW DARE YOU START THE FIGHT WITHOUT ME?!!
OH.
SO THAT'S WHAT YOU MEANT.
SHUD SHUD SHUD

PBF-FFT
HAHH!
SNORT

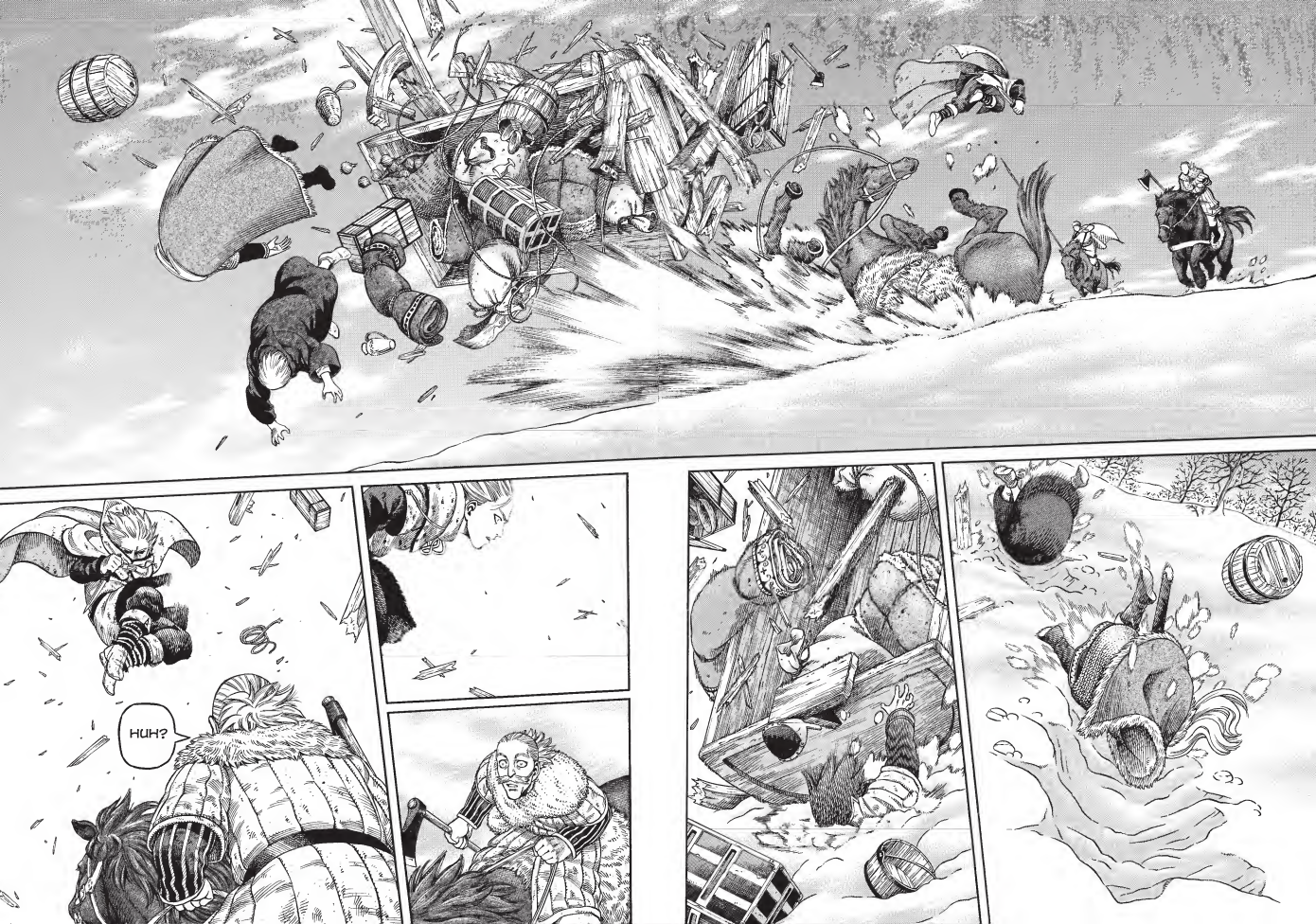

DADUM
DADUM
DADUM
CUT THEM OFF!!
THE HORSES! TAKE DOWN THE HORSES!
PBF-FFT
DADUM
DADUM

DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO!!
WHAT ARE YOU *DOING*, THORFINN?!
USE YOUR KNIVES!!
BESIDES, I'M OUT OF THE THROWING KIND!!
DADUM
ASKELADD'S NOT CATCHING UP! WHAT THE HELL IS HE DOING?!
...SHIT...
DADUM
YOU MUST SEE SENSE!!
STOP, BJORN!!
DO YOU REALLY THINK I'M STUPID ENOUGH TO FALL FOR THAT?!

DADUM
DADUM
OUR LIFE AND DEATH DEPENDS ON HOW WE USE THE PRINCE!!
THINK ABOUT IT, BJORN!!
DADUM
DADUM
DON'T BOTHER, ATLI!
WE HAVE TO KILL HIM!
BJORN IS ASKELADD'S MAN, THROUGH AND THROUGH! HE WON'T LISTEN!
ASKELADD ENTRUSTED ME WITH THE PRINCE'S SAFETY.
IF YOU THINK I'LL LET YOU TAKE HIM AWAY FROM ME, YOU'D BETTER BE PREPARED TO DIE, COWARDS!!
WELL, AT LEAST ONE OF YOU KNOWS THE SCORE!

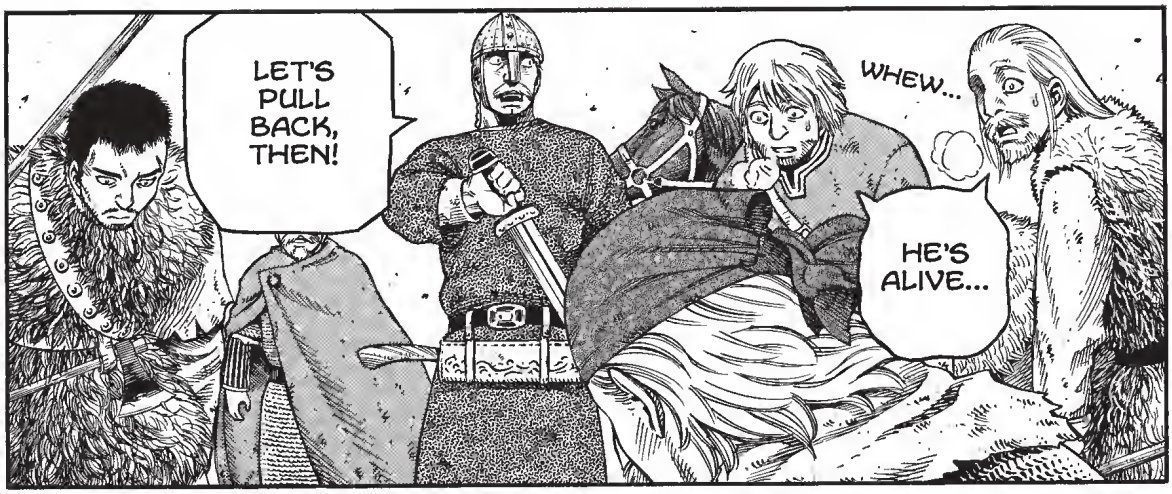
DADUM
DADUM
DADUM
NOT THE HORSES, NOT THE— NOOO!!
AH!!
WAIT!! NO!!
I SAID ME!! COME FOR ME!!
DADUM
DADUM
CHK CHK
WE'RE GONNA CRASH!!
CHUNK

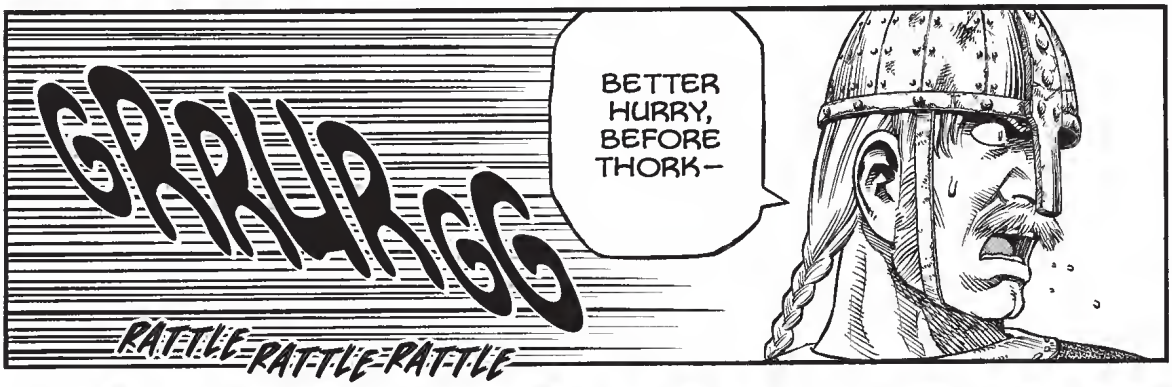
TUT


ИИН?

HLG!
CRU
NCH
STMP
PBF.
FFT
BMFF

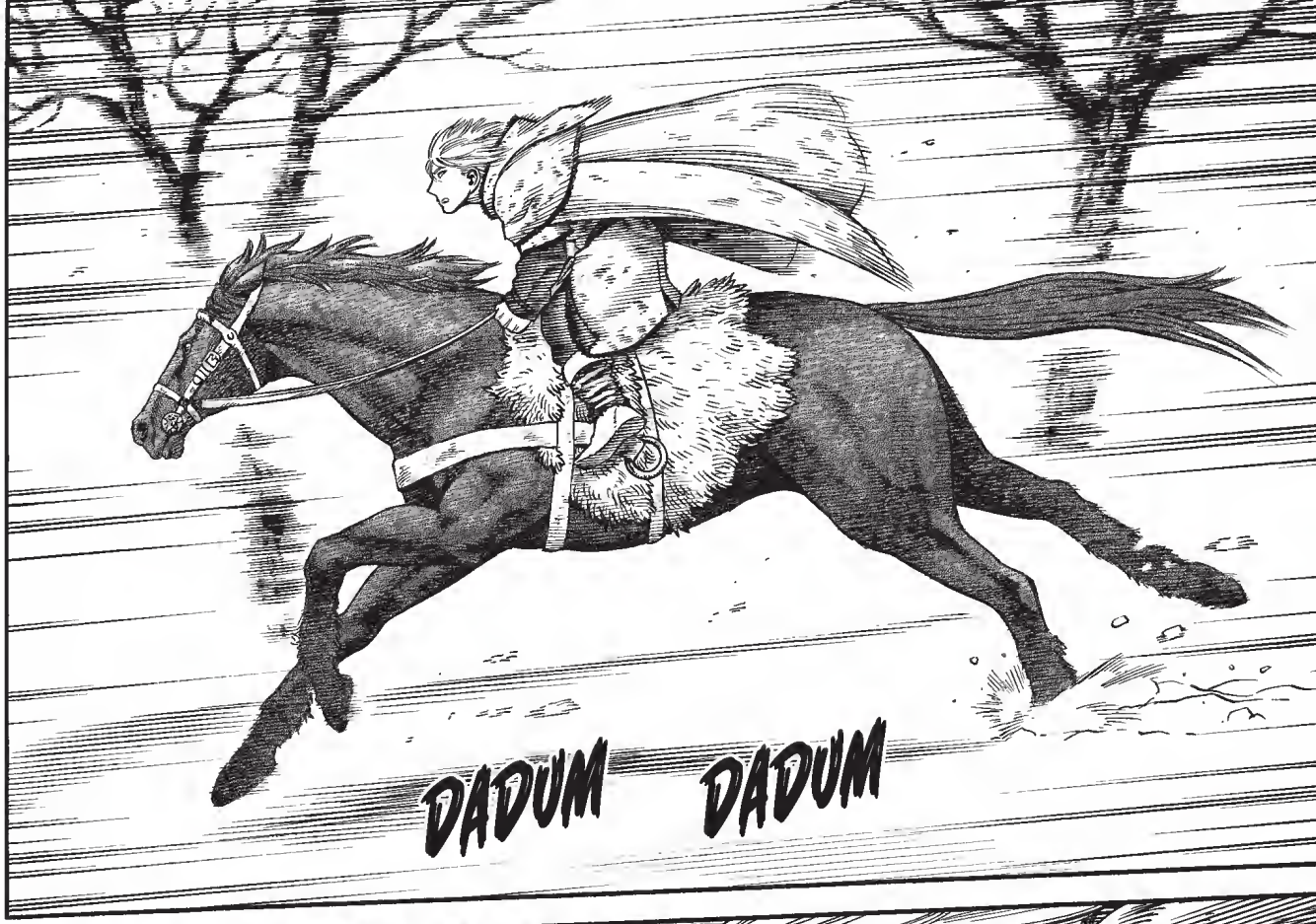
FORGET ABOUT HIM!!
HEY! THORFINN'S GETTING AWAY!!
!!
HNEE. HEEEE
DADUM DADUM
PRINCE!!
YOU STILL ALIVE?!
HNG...
YANK
WHO CARES?
BE CAREFUL, DAMN YOU!! YOU COULD HAVE KILLED HIM!!
HEY!! PRINCE!!


LET'S PULL BACK, THEN!
WHEW...
HE'S ALIVE...


GRRUR.GG
RATTLE-RATTLE-RATTLE
BETTER HURRY, BEFORE THORK-

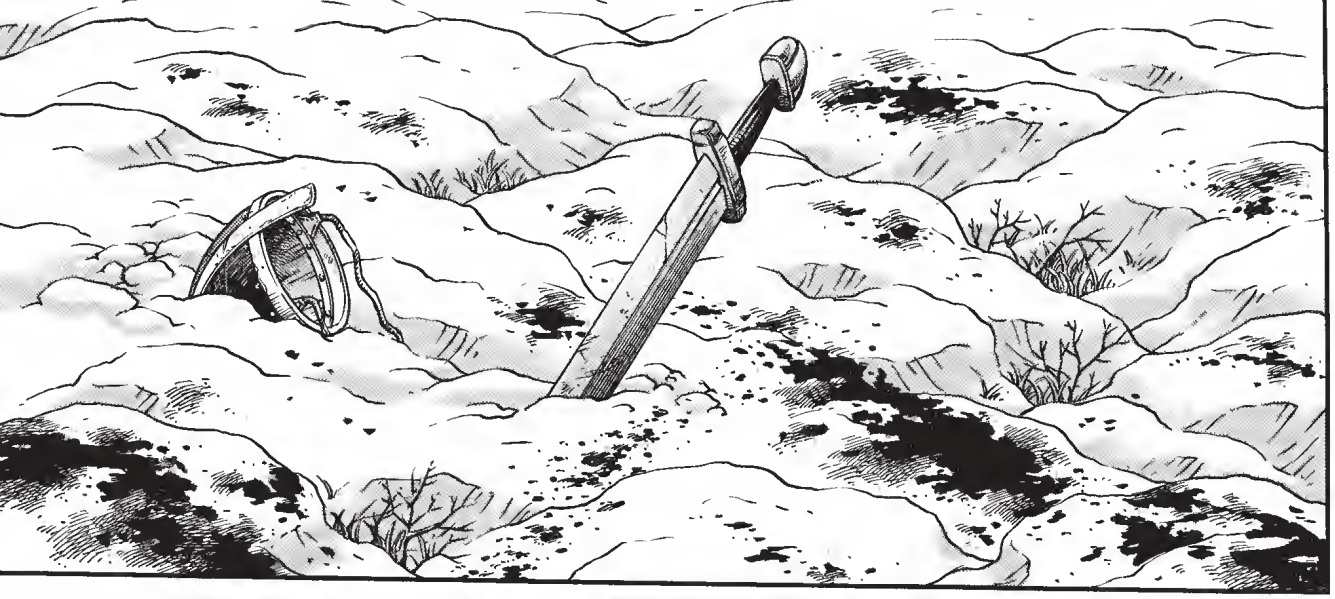
HRRGK...

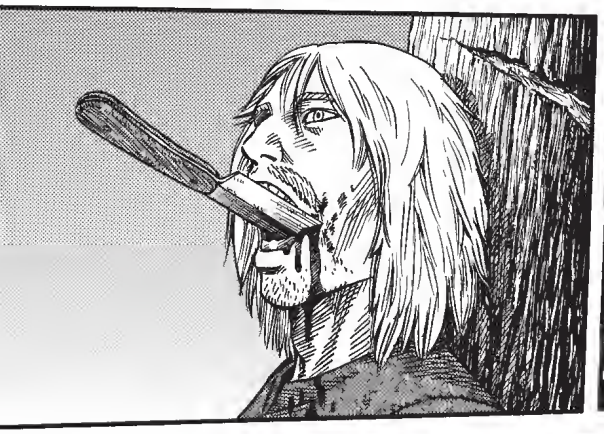
YOU'VE REALLY DONE IT NOW...
...YOU THIRD-RATE CLOWNS.
THAT MUSH-ROOM...
WHA—?!
SO YOU SURVIVED, BJORN.
TSK
I'LL SEND YOU ALL TO VALHALLA TOGETHER!!
GIVE ME THE BEST YOU'VE GOT!!
CHOMP

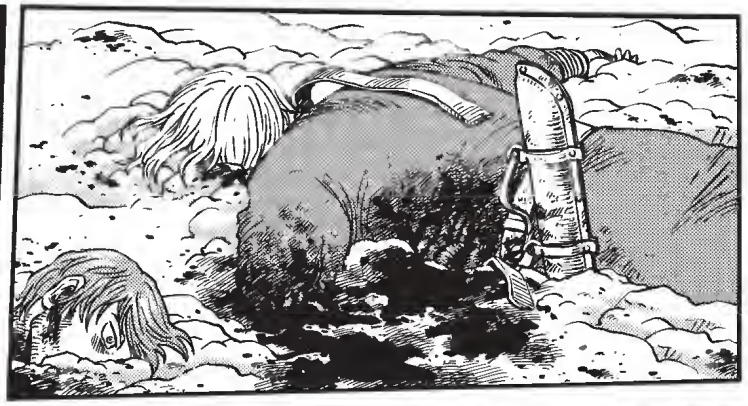

DADUM DADUM

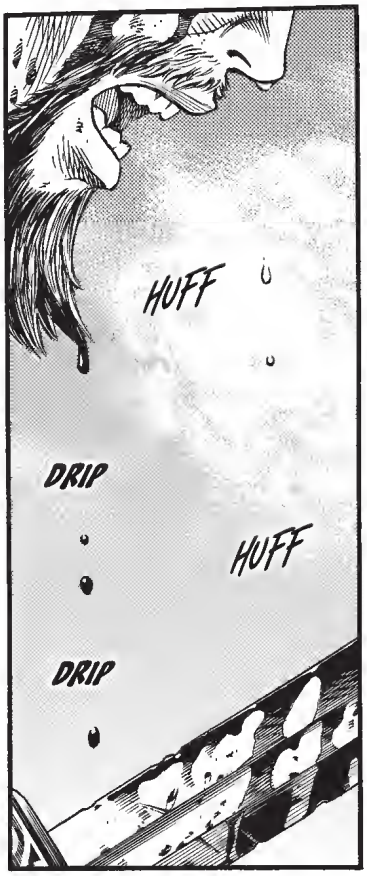
WHY DO I HAVE TO DO ALL THE DAMN WORK AROUND HERE?!
SHIT!!
FUCKING SHIT!!

YOU BETTER NOT DIE BEFORE I CAN KILL YOU, ASKELADD !!

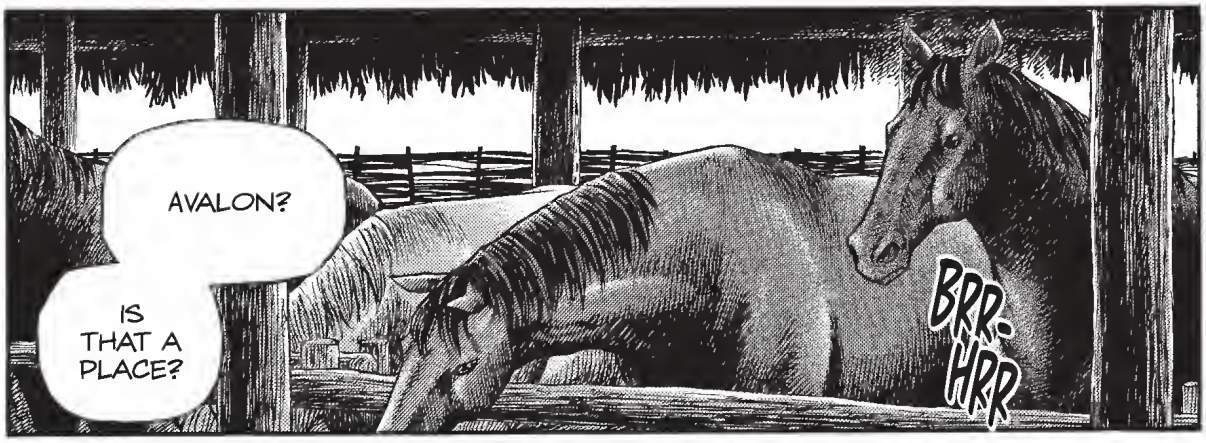


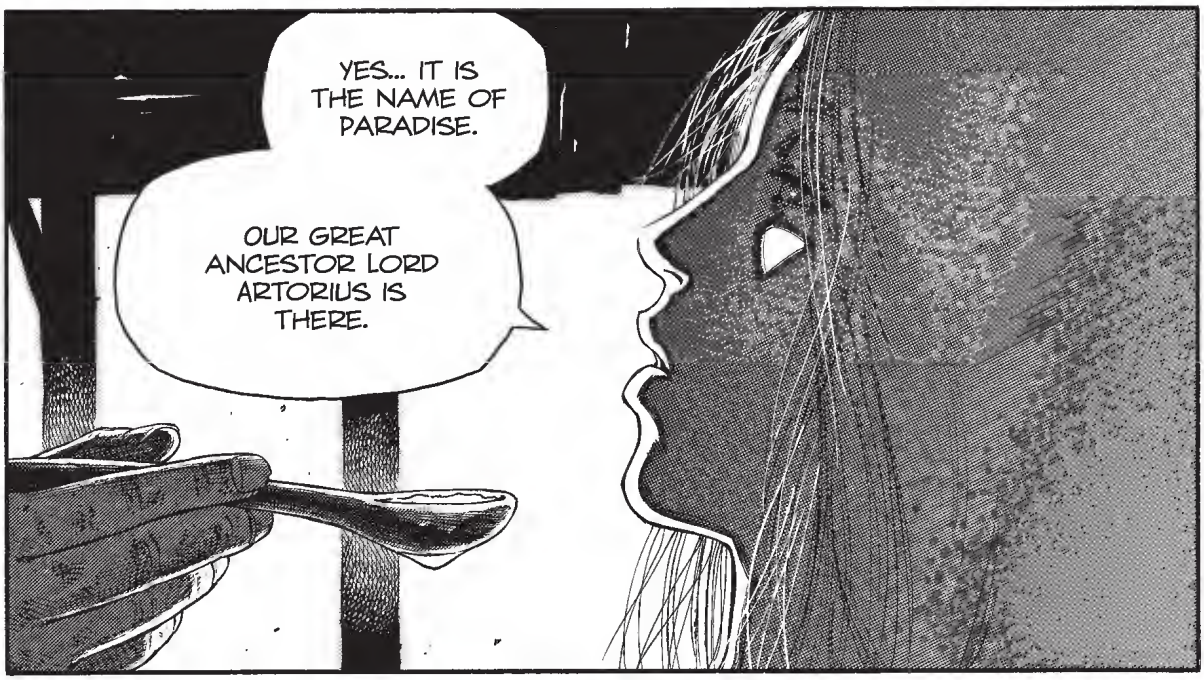


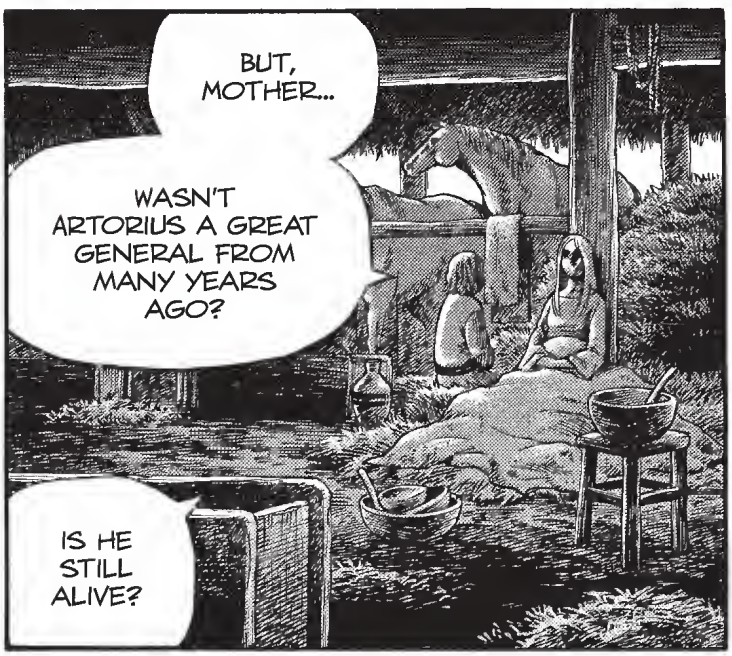


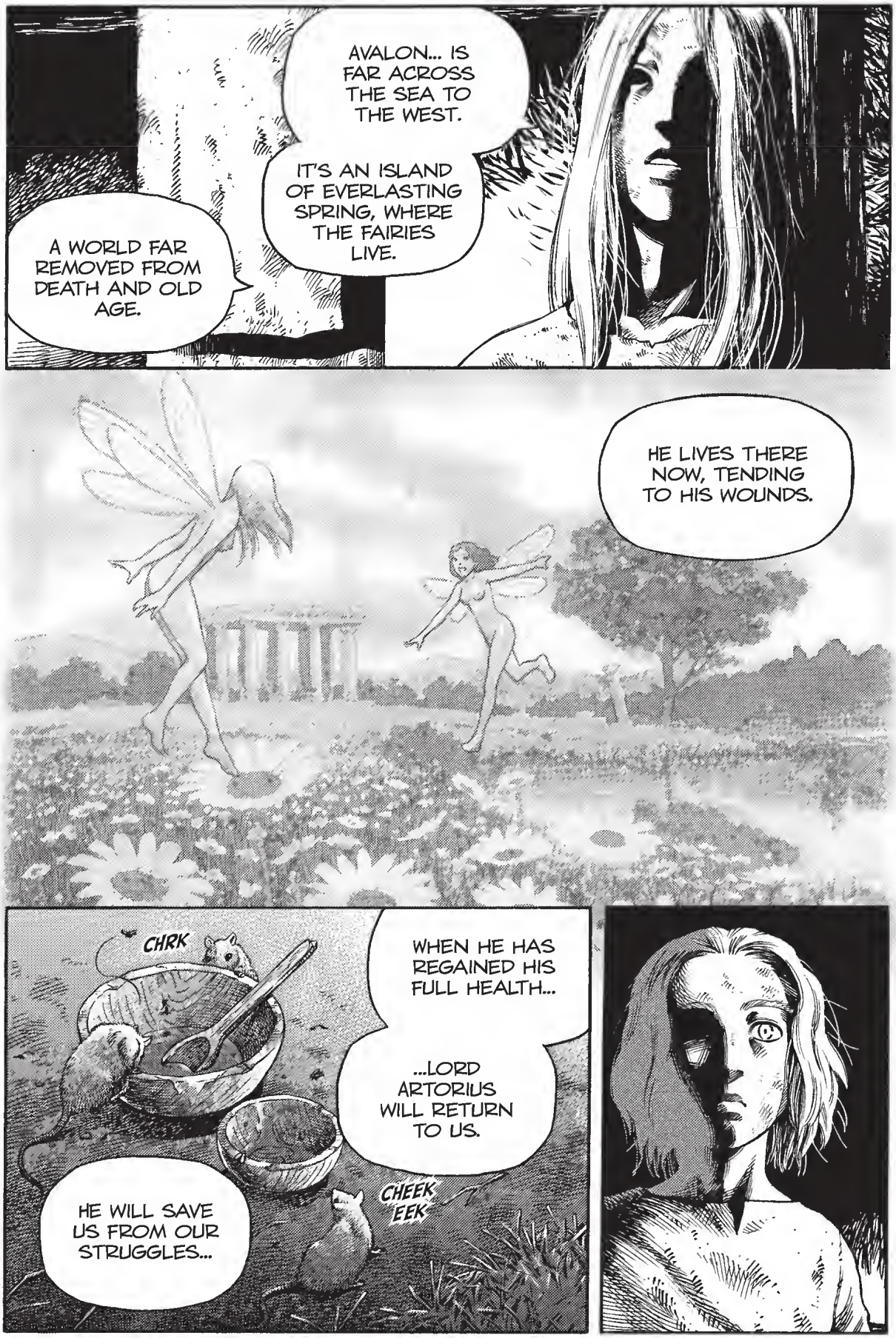

HUFF
DRIP
HUFF
DRIP

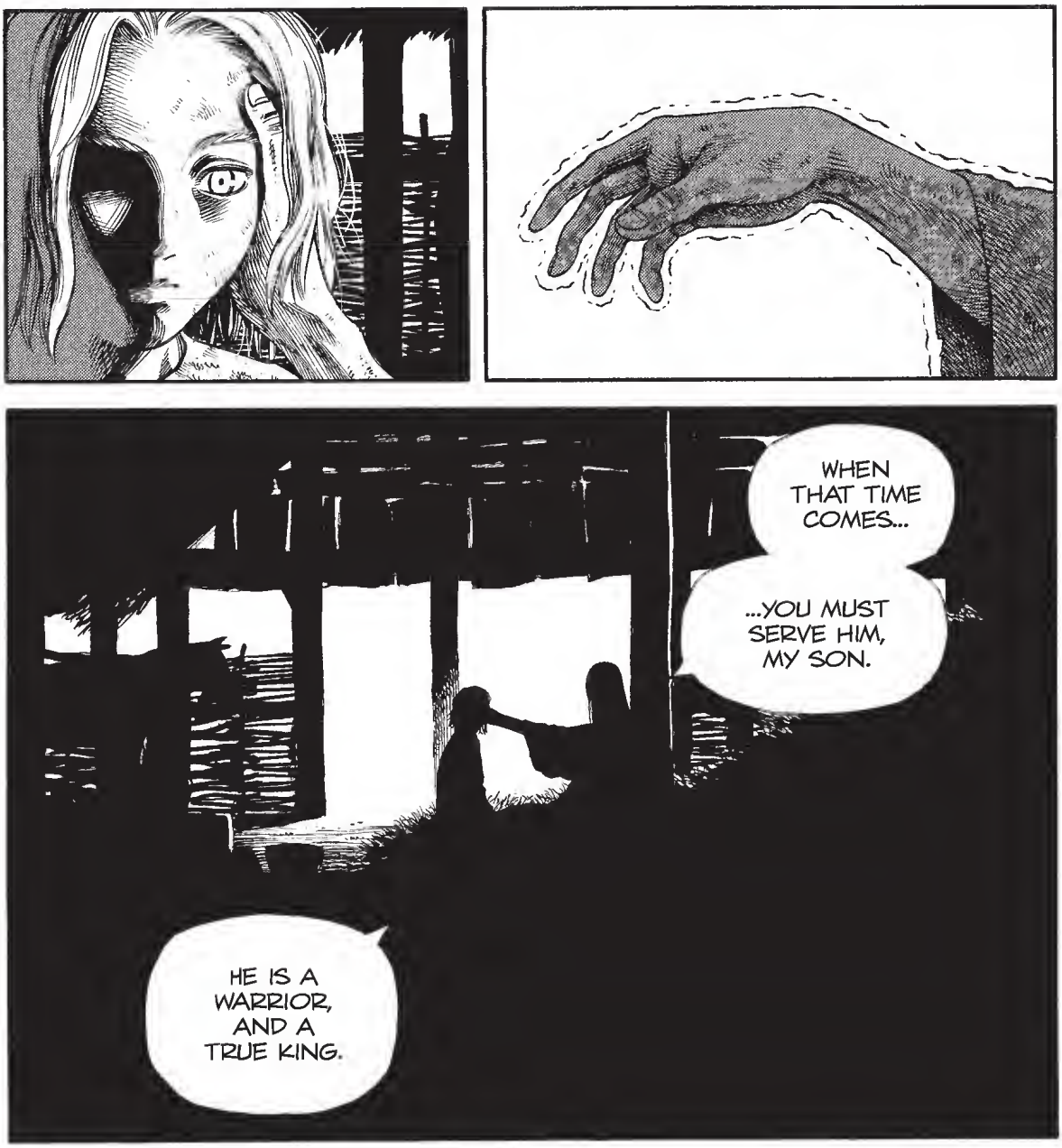
CHAPTER 33 - END


AVALON?
IS THAT A PLACE?
BRR-HRR


YES... IT IS THE NAME OF PARADISE.
OUR GREAT ANCESTOR LORD ARTORIUS IS THERE.


BUT, MOTHER...
WASN'T ARTORIUS A GREAT GENERAL FROM MANY YEARS AGO?
IS HE STILL ALIVE?


AVALON... IS FAR ACROSS THE SEA TO THE WEST.
IT'S AN ISLAND OF EVERLASTING SPRING, WHERE THE FAIRIES LIVE.
A WORLD FAR REMOVED FROM DEATH AND OLD AGE.
HE LIVES THERE NOW, TENDING TO HIS WOUNDS.
CHRK
WHEN HE HAS REGAINED HIS FULL HEALTH...
...LORD ARTORIUS WILL RETURN TO US.
CHEEK EEK
HE WILL SAVE US FROM OUR STRUGGLES...


WHEN THAT TIME COMES...
...YOU MUST SERVE HIM, MY SON.
HE IS A WARRIOR, AND A TRUE KING.
BE HIS WISDOM...
BE HIS SWORD...
AND ONE DAY...

CHAPTER 34: AVALON

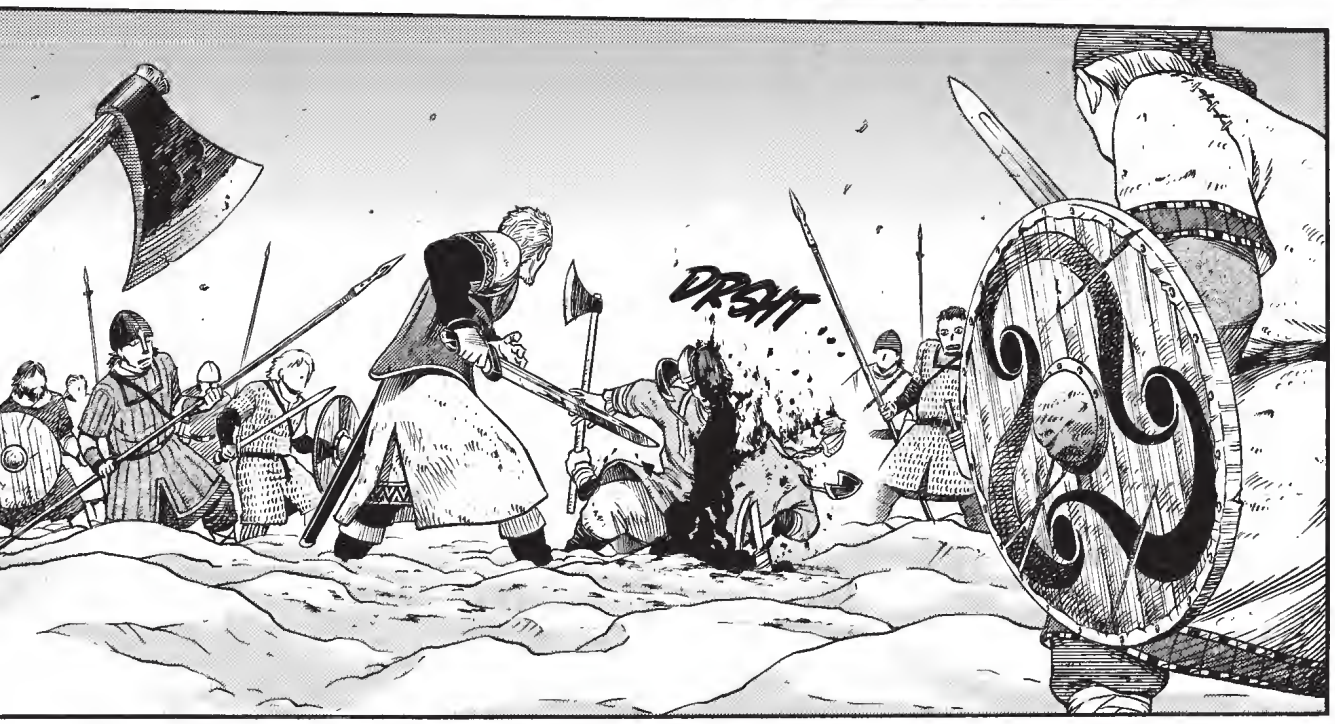
RAAHH
THUKK
KTANG
FWUM
VMMM
WHUSH
ERMF

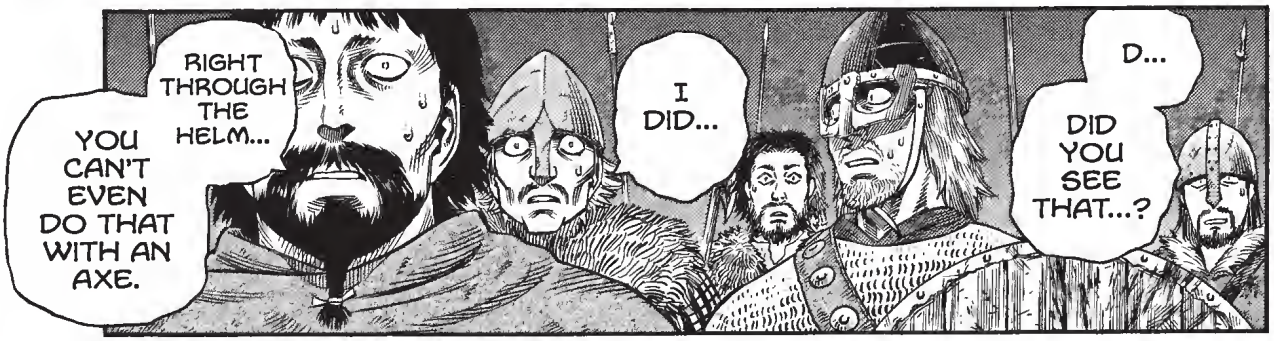
BE PATIENT, ASKELADD.
WAIT FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO ESCAPE.
RAA
HHH
GTANG
CLANG
TING
KLANK
SHH...
SHUMP

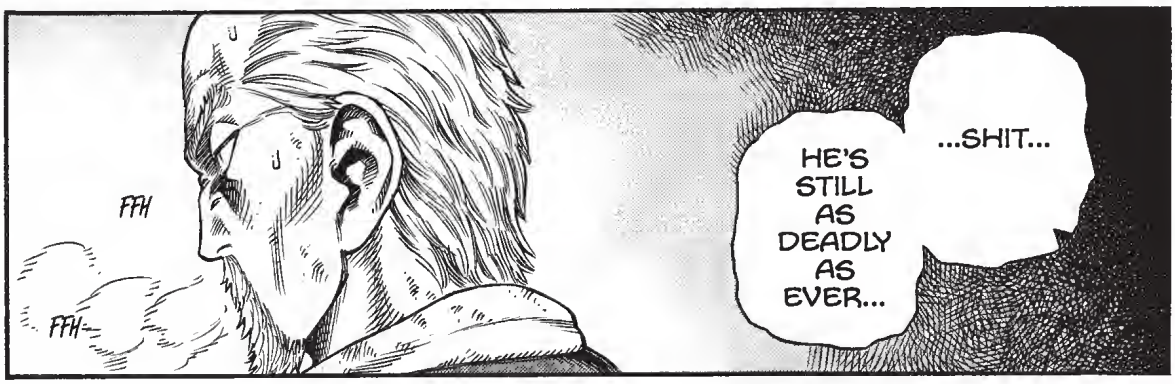
KTHOMP
WHOA!
GRFH!
FWOOSH
EH?
IF I CAN JUST HOLD OUT UNTIL THEN...
THORKELL'S MEN WILL ARRIVE SOON, AND THEN THE REAL CHAOS BEGINS.

HK!!
RUAH!!
GRAKK
ZJORSH
THAT FUCK-ING HURT!!
THK

?!


DRSHT

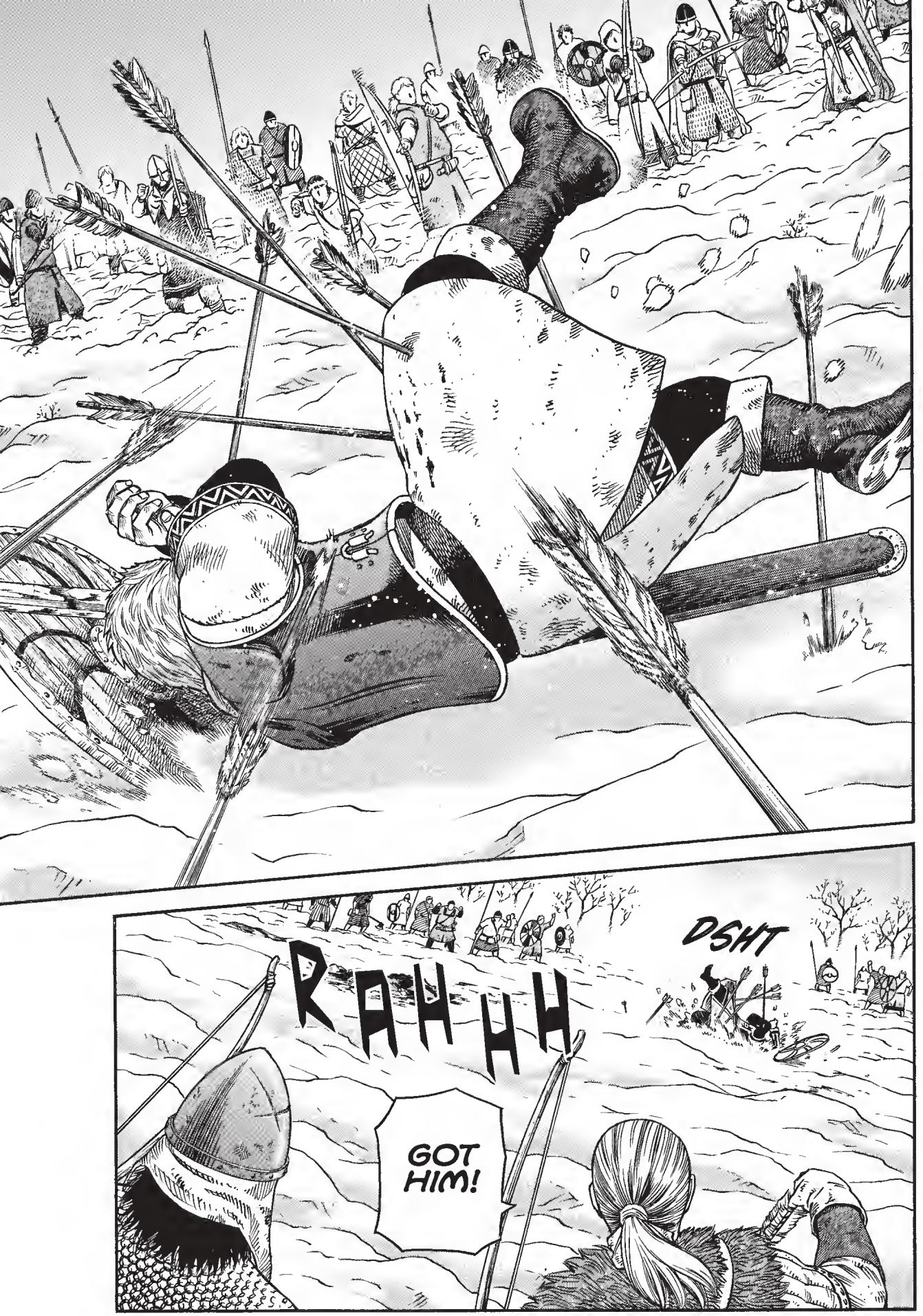

YOU CAN'T EVEN DO THAT WITH AN AXE.
RIGHT THROUGH THE HELM...
I DID...
D...
DID YOU SEE THAT...?

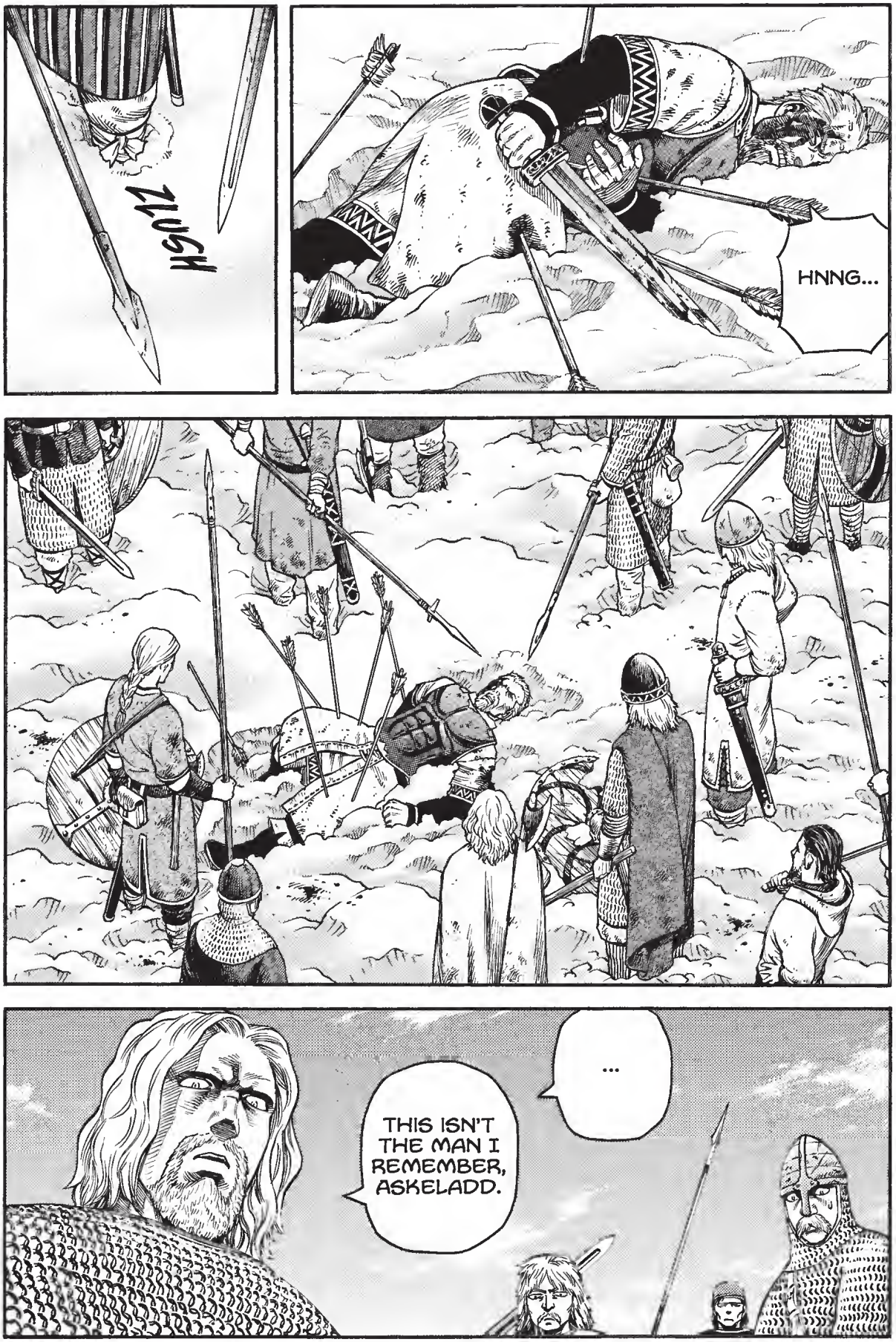

FFH
FFH—
HE'S STILL AS DEADLY AS EVER...
...SHIT...

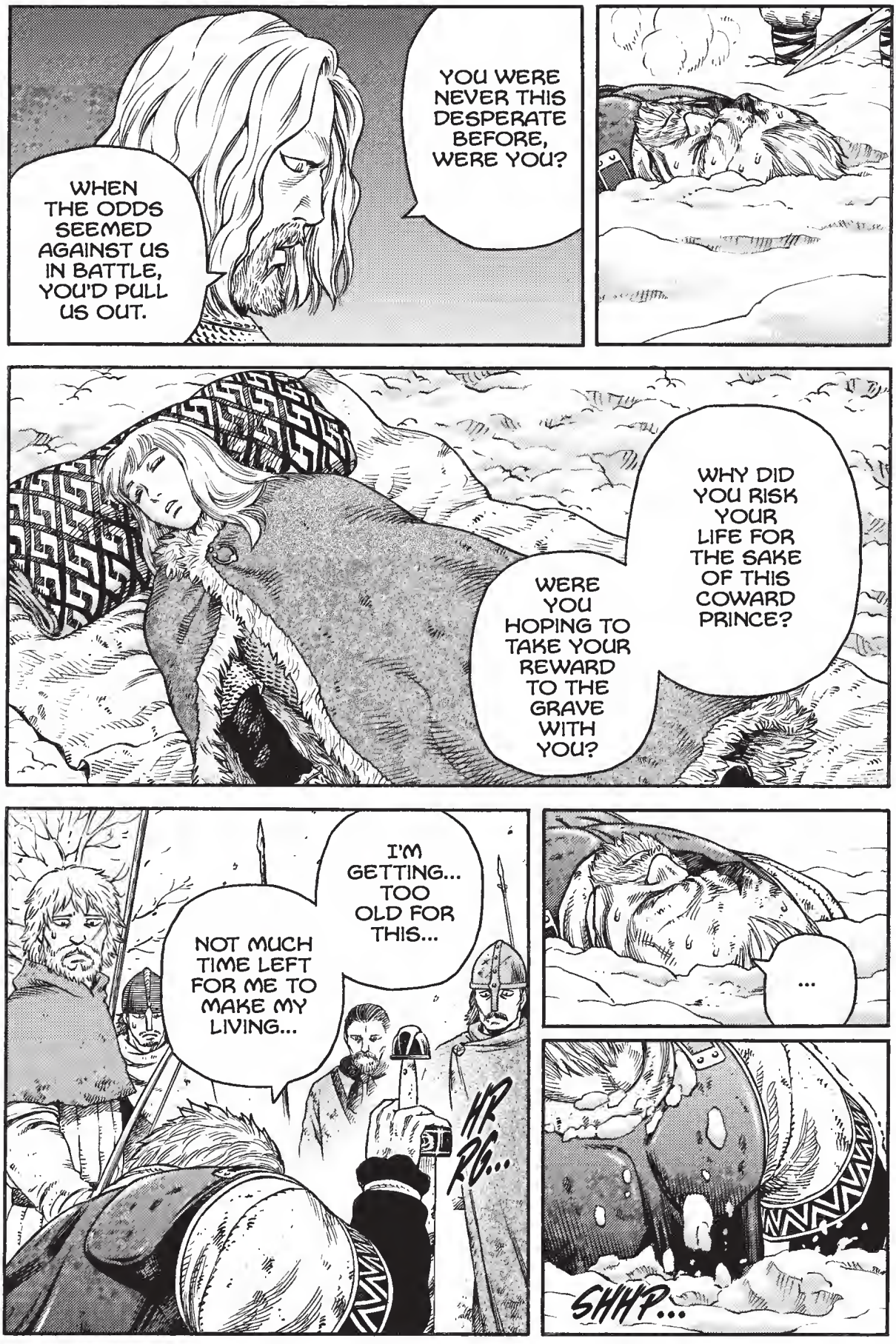
THAT'S NOT MY STYLE...
SHIT... ONE GOOD BLOW AND I LOST MY COOL...
PFFF
SFFH...
C'MON, LET'S GO.
I WON'T YELL AT YOU ANY-MORE.
SORRY ABOUT SHOUTING LIKE THAT.
KSHAK...
SHHK...

NOW THEY'VE BROKEN OUT THE RANGED WEAP-ONS.
...TSK ...
JUST GREAT.
WEST SIDE, STAND DOWN! YOU'LL BE STRUCK BY THE STRAYS!
WHAT IF I AM, YOU HALF-DEAD LOUT?!
ARE YOU BEHIND ALL OF THIS, TORGRIM?
IF YOU DID ALL THIS TO SEIZE THE PRINCE, YOU'LL NEED ME IN THAT CASE, WON'T YOU?
BJORN AND THORFINN ARE DEADLY FIGHTERS. THEY MIGHT FIGHT OFF THE PURSUERS.
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS? EVEN I AM A MORTAL MAN.
BUT ONLY IF I'M ALIVE.
TAKE ME HOSTAGE, AND BJORN WILL BRING BACK THE PRINCE TO EXCHANGE.

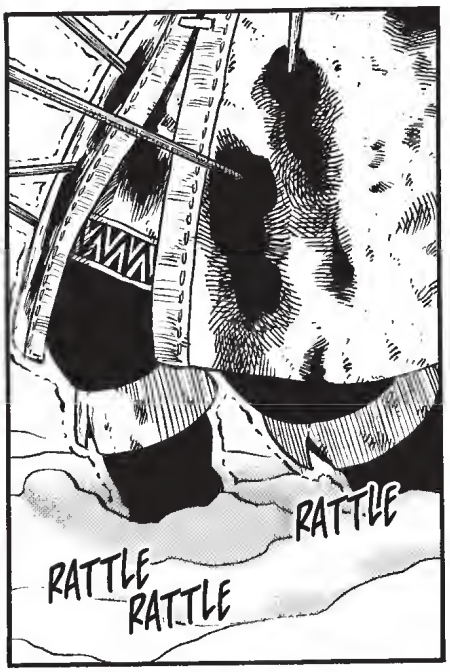
AIM FOR HIS LEGS.
WHAT'S THE PLAN, TOR-GRIM?
...
LEAP
TSK!
VUM
VUM
VUVUM
VUM
VUM
VUVUM
ZWOOM


RAHHH
DSHT
GOT HIM!


HSU11
HNNG...
...
THIS ISN'T THE MAN I REMEMBER, ASKELADD.


YOU WERE NEVER THIS DESPERATE BEFORE, WERE YOU?
WHEN THE ODDS SEEMED AGAINST US IN BATTLE, YOU'D PULL US OUT.
WHY DID YOU RISK YOUR LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF THIS COWARD PRINCE?
WERE YOU HOPING TO TAKE YOUR REWARD TO THE GRAVE WITH YOU?
...
I'M GETTING... TOO OLD FOR THIS...
NOT MUCH TIME LEFT FOR ME TO MAKE MY LIVING...
HRRG...
SHHP...

AT LONG LAST...
...I LOST MY PATIENCE.

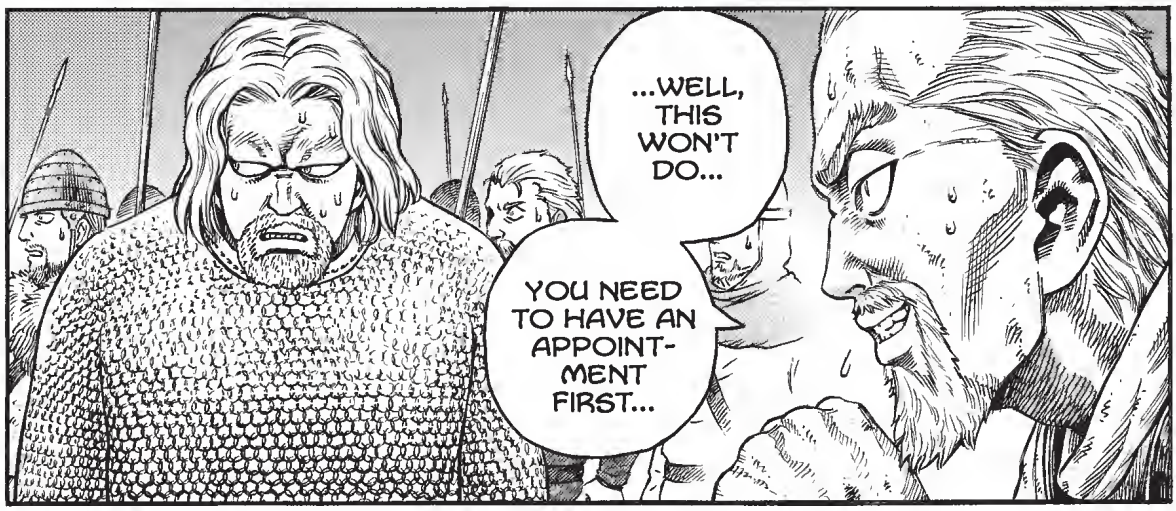

RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE

CAN'T WAIT FOR THE TRUE KING... TO RETURN FROM AVALON...
...ANY LONGER ...

WHAT IN HELL IS THAT...?
AVE-LONG?
...?

DID YOU HEAR ME? GO AND...
LURCH...
WHAT-EVER. TIE HIM UP.
THWUMP
THWUMP
THWUMP
YO! ♪
HAVING FUN, BOYS?

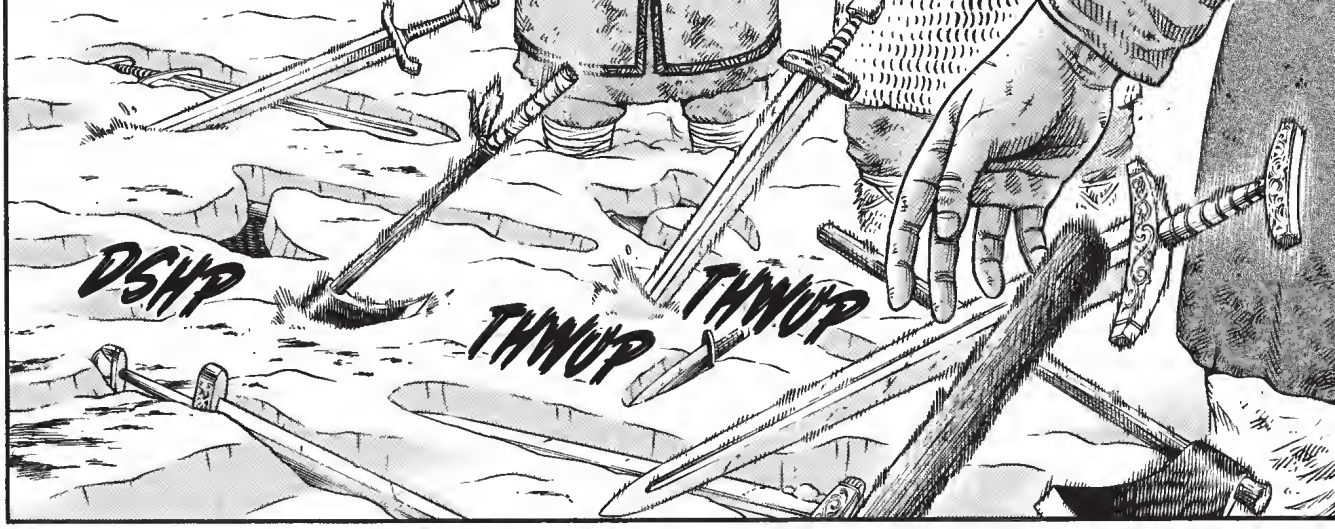
I'D LOVE TO GET A GOOD LOOK AT THE FELLOW.
SO WHICH ONE OF YOU IS THIS ASKELADD I HEAR ABOUT?

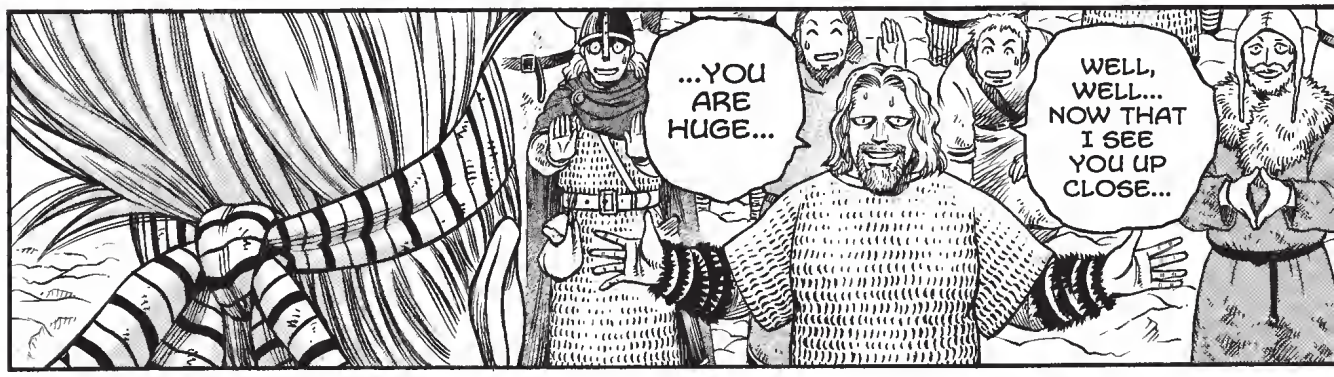

...WELL, THIS WON'T DO...
YOU NEED TO HAVE AN APPOINT-MENT FIRST...

DADUM...
PBF-FFT
!!
RAHHHH

CHAPTER 34 - END

CHAPTER 35: CONTACT


DSHP
THWUP
THWUP


...YOU ARE HUGE...
WELL, WELL... NOW THAT I SEE YOU UP CLOSE...

I INTEND NO RESIS-TANCE... JUST HEAR ME OUT.
THE NAME'S TORGRIM.

BOSS.
NO PRINCE.
EXACTLY! I WAS JUST GOING TO EXPLAIN.
WE WERE PLANNING TO HAND THE PRINCE OVER TO YOU.
BUT THIS GUY, OUR LEADER ASKELADD, LET THE BOY ESCAPE...

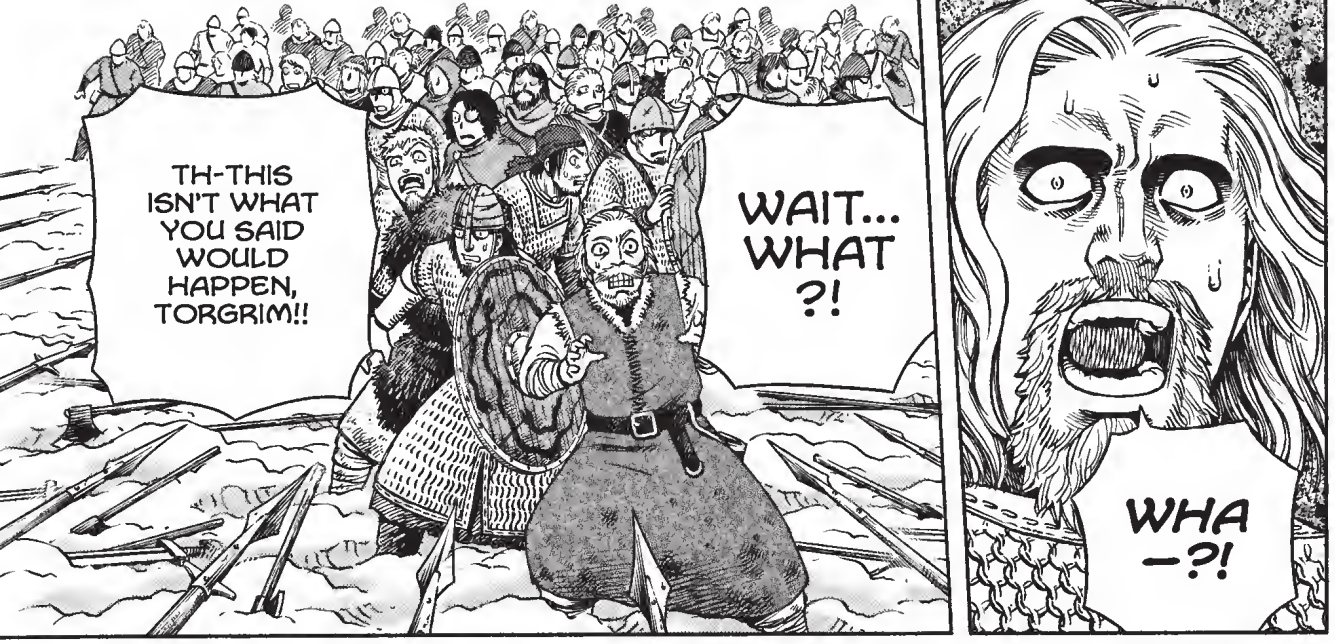
JUST LEAVE THE PRINCE UP TO US, THORKELL.
BY ODIN, YOU'LL HAVE YOUR QUARRY SOON.
DON'T WORRY, THOUGH. WE'VE GOT A DOZEN OF OUR BEST CHASING AFTER HIM.
ZLUSH
HEY!
JUST GET A LOAD OF THIS.
AND WE'VE GOT A TRICK UP OUR SLEEVE!

ZAAA

SO YOU'RE ASKE-LADD.
WELL, YOU LOOK CLEVER.
AHA...
DID YOU KILL HIM ALREADY?
I CAN'T HELP BUT NOTICE THAT THORFINN'S NOT HERE.
BY THE WAY,
I SEE.
WELL, THAT'S A RELIEF.
I HAVEN'T...
I PUT HIM ON THE PRINCE'S GUARD. HE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS MUTINY.

THE WAIT IS OVER, BOYS!!
THAT CLEARS IT UP FOR ME!!

YOU CAN KILL ALL OF 'EM EXCEPT FOR ASKELADD!!
RAHHHH

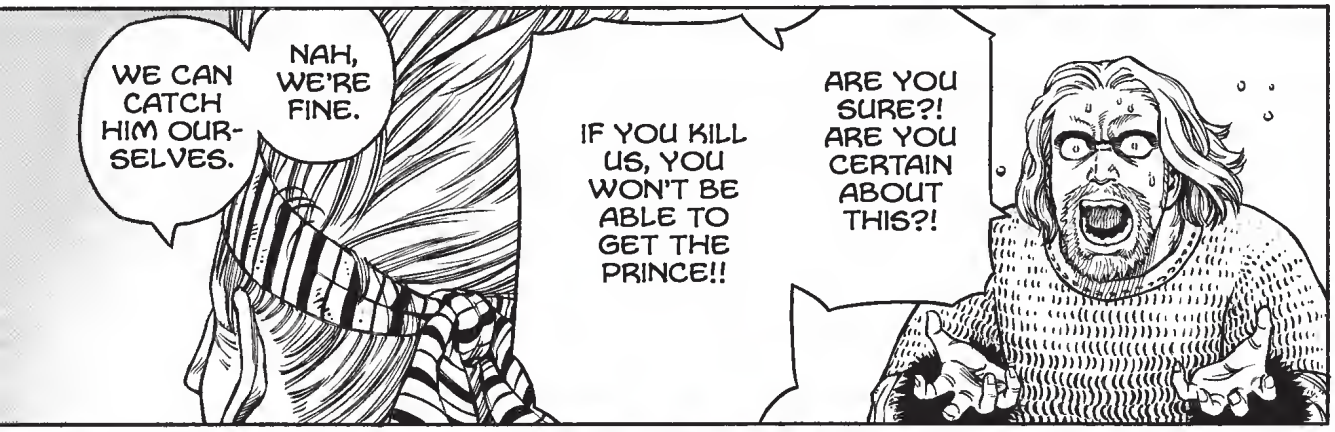

TH-THIS ISN'T WHAT YOU SAID WOULD HAPPEN, TORGRIM!!
WAIT... WHAT ?!
WHA —?!

DIE LIKE WAR-RIORS.
PICK UP YOUR WEAPONS.
HEY, YOU.

HRG...
NOBODY GOES TO VALHALLA UNARMED.
WE'RE DOING THIS FOR YOU.
HURRY UP, NOW!
MURMUR

RAHHHH
RA-AA-HH!!
HAGH!
THURK
BOOM

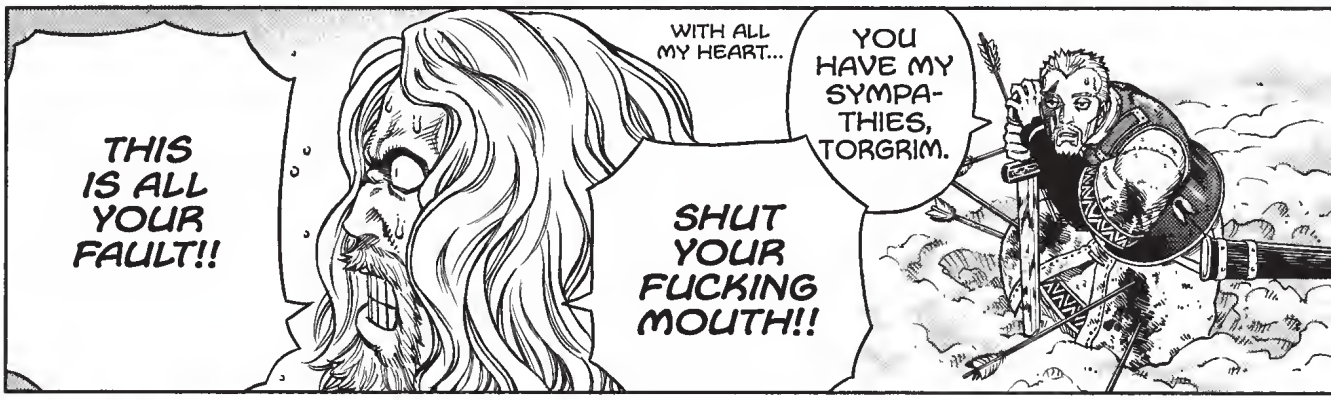
GWEAH
NOW THIS IS A PROPER BATTLE.
HA HA HA! MUCH BETTER.
HH
WAIT, THOR-KELL, WAIT!!
GRCH
DRSHH
AA H
CRAK
AAARGH
GYLLE


WE CAN CATCH HIM OUR-SELVES.
NAH, WE'RE FINE.
IF YOU KILL US, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO GET THE PRINCE!!
ARE YOU SURE?! ARE YOU CERTAIN ABOUT THIS?!

GIVE ME YOUR BEST SWING.
I'LL SEE THAT YOU DIE A WARRIOR.

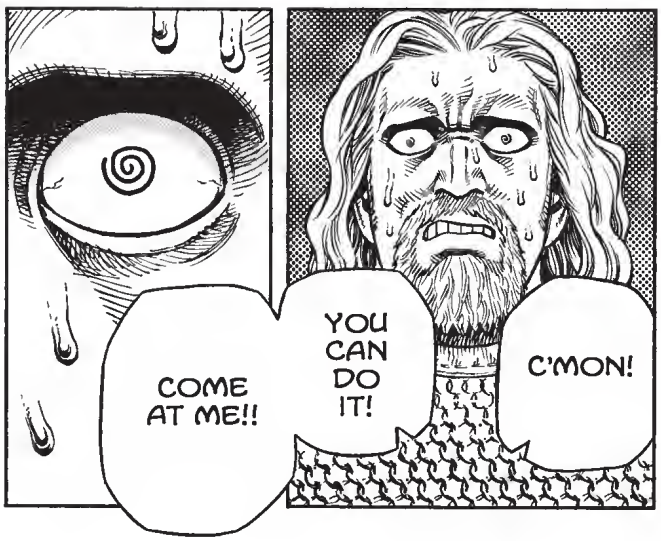
HERE.
YOUR AXE.
SHOVE

RAHHHH
HRGYAAA
MMPH...
ONE, TWO!
THREE, FOUR!
EEEK!
BRCH STAB
THUD
HRRG!
GRRGH!
DIE, BASTARD!
HA HA HA!
GRCH
THWAM

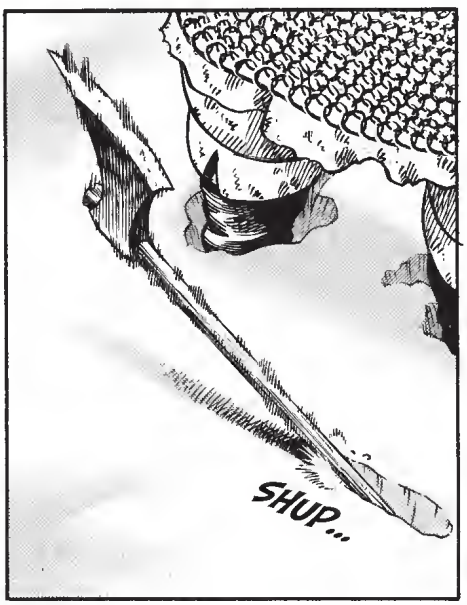

THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT!!
WITH ALL MY HEART...
YOU HAVE MY SYMPA-THIES, TORGRIM.
SHUT YOUR FUCKING MOUTH!!

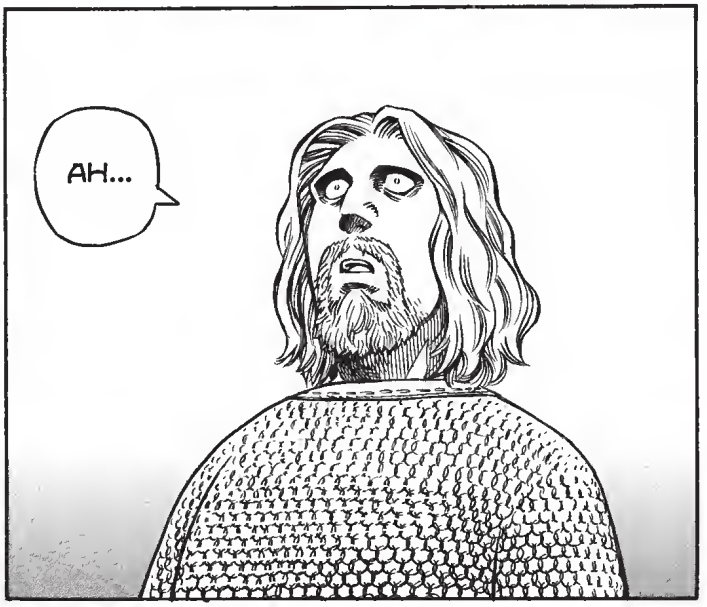
SO SWING YOUR AXE AND DIE LIKE A MAN.
I'M HERE TO HELP YOU.

GIVE IT UP, TORGRIM. YOUR DEATH IS AT HAND.
IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN. NO ESCAPE.


COME AT ME!!
YOU CAN DO IT!
C'MON!

HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA


SHUP...


AH...

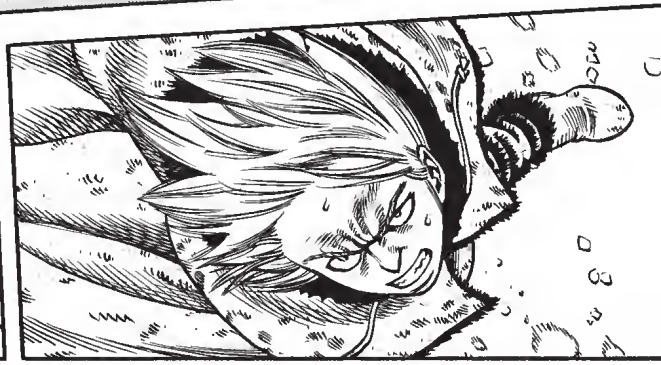
MAYBE I PUT A BIT TOO MUCH PRESSURE ON HIM.
OHH, THAT'S NO GOOD.
AH?
HULLO?
DONK DONK
HE'S GONE ON THE INSIDE.
KTHWAMM
RAHHH
THWAM
GYAA!
AAH!
AAGH!
...?
...
GULP

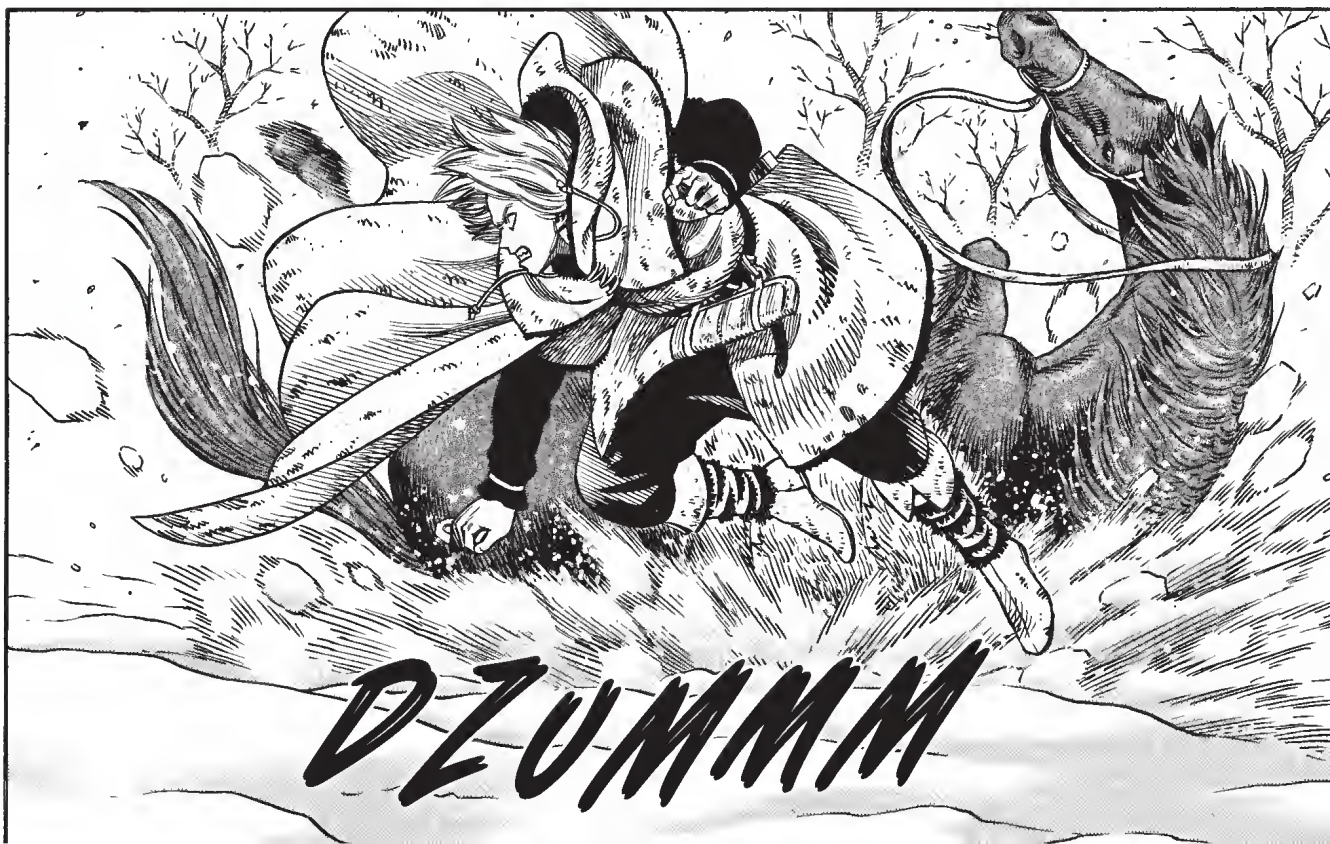
RAAHHHH
THWOMP
GLEAH!
THUDD
?!
DA-DUMM
THOR-FINN!!
RAHHH

DSHH
AAHH

ズン
ズズズ

YOU GOTTA BE SHITTING ME.




DZUMMM

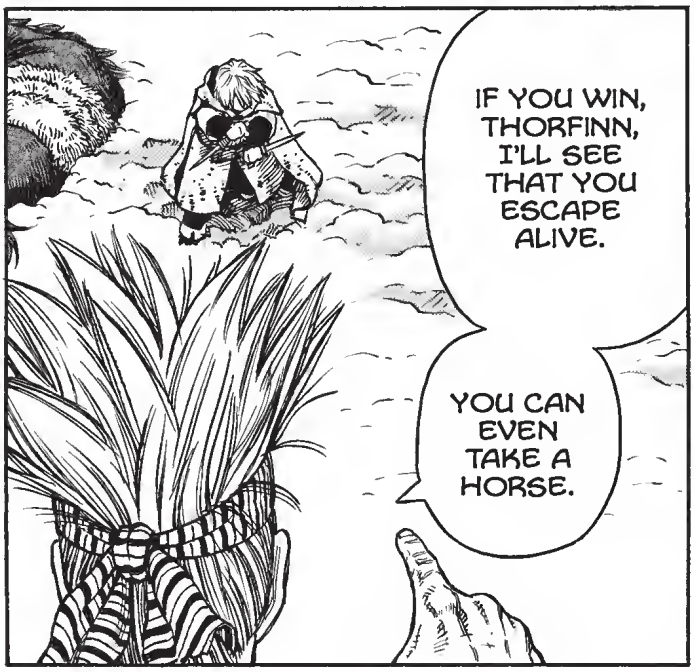
THERE YOU ARE, THORFINN!
IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU WELL!
DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH ASKE-LADD !!
HE'S MINE TO KILL!!

LAY A SINGLE FINGER ON HIM, AND IT'LL BE THE DEATH OF YOU!!
GOT THAT, YOU ENOR-MOUS BAS-TARD?!
TOUCH HIM, AND YOU DIE!!

...I ALWAYS THOUGHT HE WAS AN IDIOT...
...BUT I HAD NO IDEA.
HE'S A MOUSE TRYING TO FIGHT A BEAR...

I THOUGHT HE WAS YOUR BOSS.
HE'S YOURS ?
HE'S NOT MY BOSS!!
HO HO! HE'S GOT SPUNK.
GOTTA GIVE HIM CREDIT JUST FOR SAYING IT.
DID YOU HEAR THAT?
THE LITTLE ONE'S GONNA KILL THE CAPTAIN.
HAND ASKE-LADD OVER.
OR FACE YOUR DEATH.
WHAT'S THAT?
FINE, I WON'T HAND HIM OVER.

R A A A H H
DID YOU HEAR THAT?! THORFINN AND I HAVE DECIDED TO DUEL OVER THE POSSESSION OF ASKELADD!!
YOU'RE ALL WITNESS-ES!!
H H H
KILL 'IM, BOSS!
BRILLIANT!


IF YOU WIN, THORFINN, I'LL SEE THAT YOU ESCAPE ALIVE.
YOU CAN EVEN TAKE A HORSE.

I GET NO SAY IN THIS?
SON OF A BITCH...

KEH!
DON'T EXPECT A REPEAT OF LONDON...
THAT'S WHAT I WAS HOPING TO HEAR...
...SON OF THORS!

CHAPTER 35 - END

VINLAND SAGA MAP

THORFINN'S TRAVELS

VILLAGE IN MERCIA

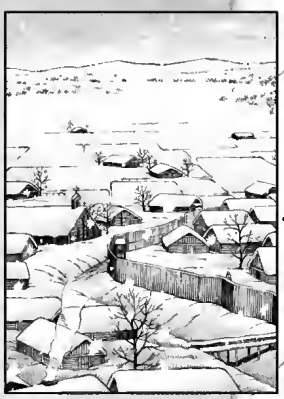
Askeladd raided this village to use as a hideout after a sudden blizzard halted the march, but the group was forced to flee when Thorkell found them.

ASKELADD

THORFINN

CANUTE

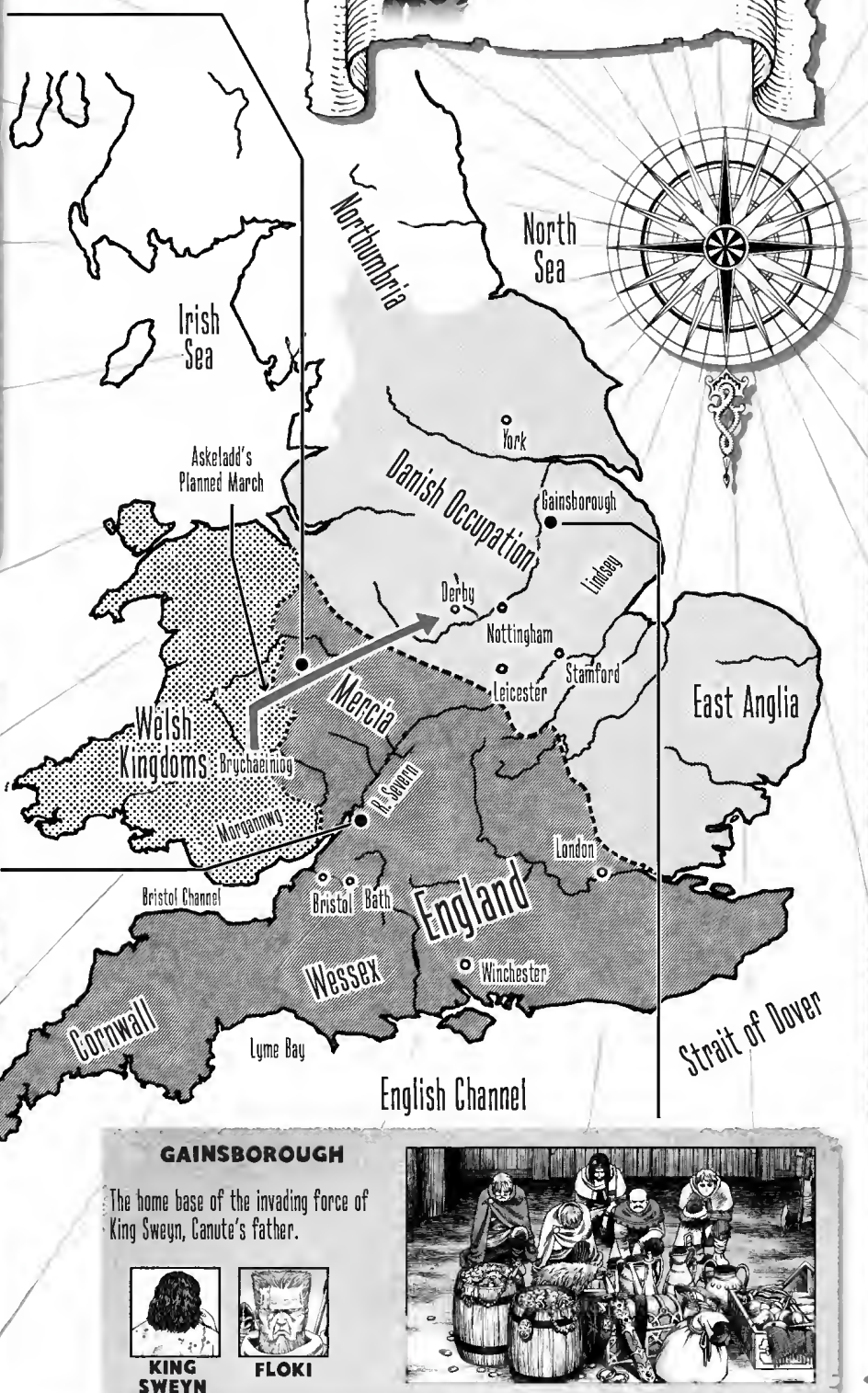
RAGNAR



GLOUCESTER IN MERCIA

Thorkell temporarily stayed here on his search for Thorfinn and Canute. When he learned of Askeladd's location, the wintry march began.

THORKELL



GAINSBOROUGH

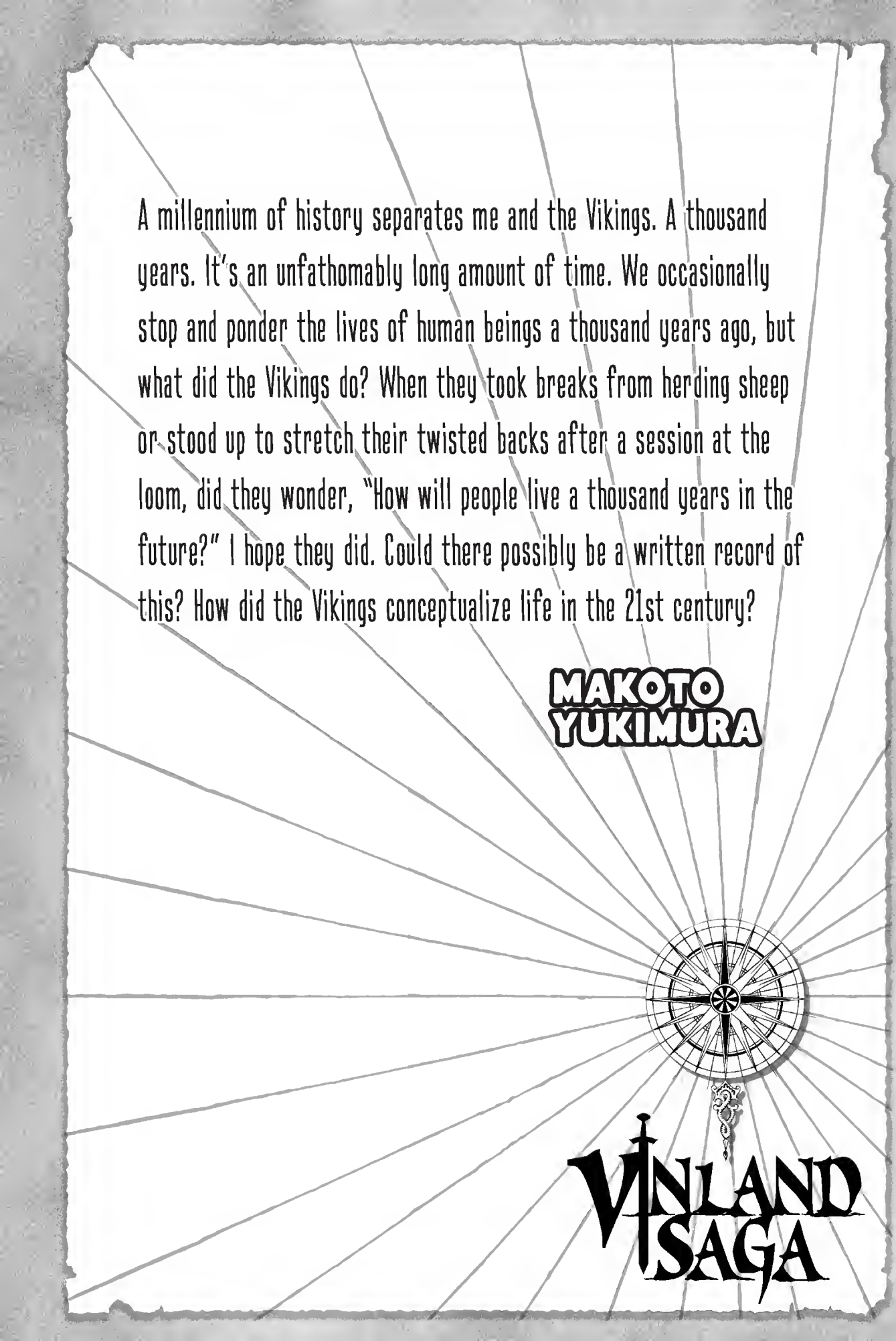
The home base of the invading force of King Sweyn, Canute's father.

KING SWEYN

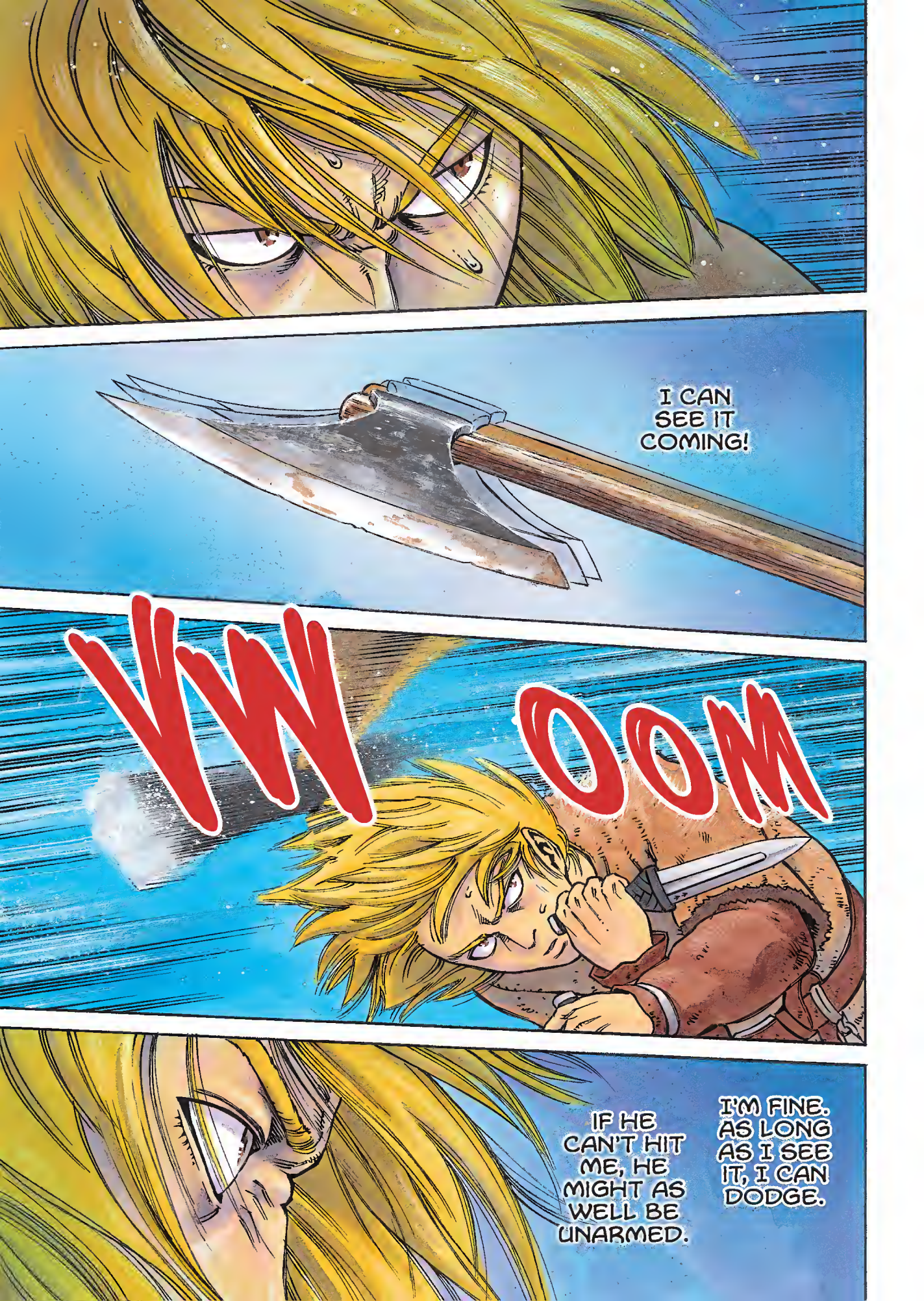
FLOKI

A millennium of history separates me and the Vikings. A thousand years. It's an unfathomably long amount of time. We occasionally stop and ponder the lives of human beings a thousand years ago, but what did the Vikings do? When they took breaks from herding sheep or stood up to stretch their twisted backs after a session at the loom, did they wonder, "How will people live a thousand years in the future?" I hope they did. Could there possibly be a written record of this? How did the Vikings conceptualize life in the 21st century?

MAKOTO YUKIMURA



VINLAND
SAGA


I CAN SEE IT COMING!
VW
OOM
I'M FINE. AS LONG AS I SEE IT, I CAN DODGE.
IF HE CAN'T HIT ME, HE MIGHT AS WELL BE UNARMED.

CHAPTER 36: TWO ON THE BATTLEFIELD

BWOFF
CLAANG

RAHH
RAAHHHH
THE SHRIMP'S PRETTY GOOD!!
HE ACTUALLY GOT A HIT IN ON THE CAPTAIN!!
HANG IN THERE!
NICE WORK, KID!
THIS MIGHT BE THE BEST FIGHT WE'VE SEEN IN AGES!
THE LITTLE NIMBLE ONES ARE ALWAYS TOUGH TO KILL.

WHAT?!
BUT I LOVE THIS COAT!
SHIT! NO BLOOD.
MUST BE WEARING CHAIN MAIL UNDER-NEATH.
YOU CLEARLY GOT THOSE FROM THORS.
RAHHH
HAH! SO YOU DO NOT FEAR MY AXE.
AT LEAST YOU'VE GOT BALLS.
...
FINE, I'LL BITE...
WHAT'S WITH YOU AND MY FATHER?
HOW DO YOU KNOW HIM?

DID THORS TELL YOU NOTHING?
WHY, THAT COLD-HEARTED ...
IT WAS HIS WIFE HELGA WHO WAS FROM THE JARL'S BLOODLINE.
THORS EARNED HIS FAME THROUGH HIS SWORD ARM.
...I KNOW THAT HE WAS BORN OF A JARL.
...
DO YA?
HM?
WANNA HEAR MORE?
HOW ABOUT IT, THOR-FINN?
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUR FATHER...
...THEN YOU'LL NEED TO MAKE THIS WORTH MY WHILE.

I'LL PLAY ALONG IF YOU WANT...
...BUT IT'LL BE TRICKY TO HOLD BACK JUST ENOUGH SO YOU CAN STILL SPEAK.
... HMPH.
BWA HA HA HA HA HA HA
THE KID'S GOT A MOUTH ON HIM!
IS HE SERIOUS ?!

HA-HA-HA-HA-HAW-HAW
PLEASE, HAVE MERCY ON US, MIGHTY WARRIOR!!
OH, HE'S GOT ME SCARED NOW!!
HEE HEE!
MY GUT IS KILLING ME!
DID YOU HEAR THAT?! HE WANTS TO GO EASY ON THE BOSS!!
GRU
HRBF!
HA-HA-HA-HA
LOOK AT THE FOOL!
I RECOGNIZE THORFINN AS A TRUE WARRIOR.
DO NOT LAUGH.
DID HE SAY SOME-THING FUNNY?

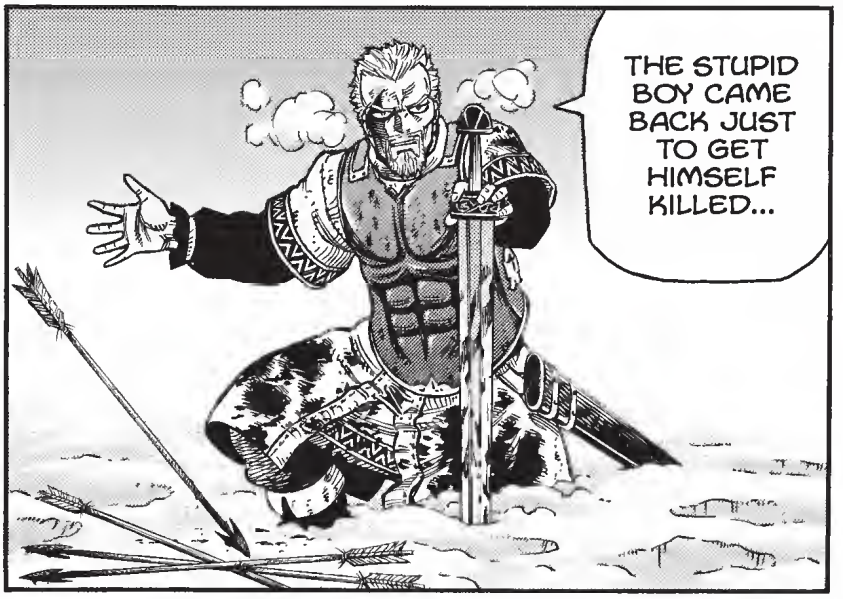
SHH...

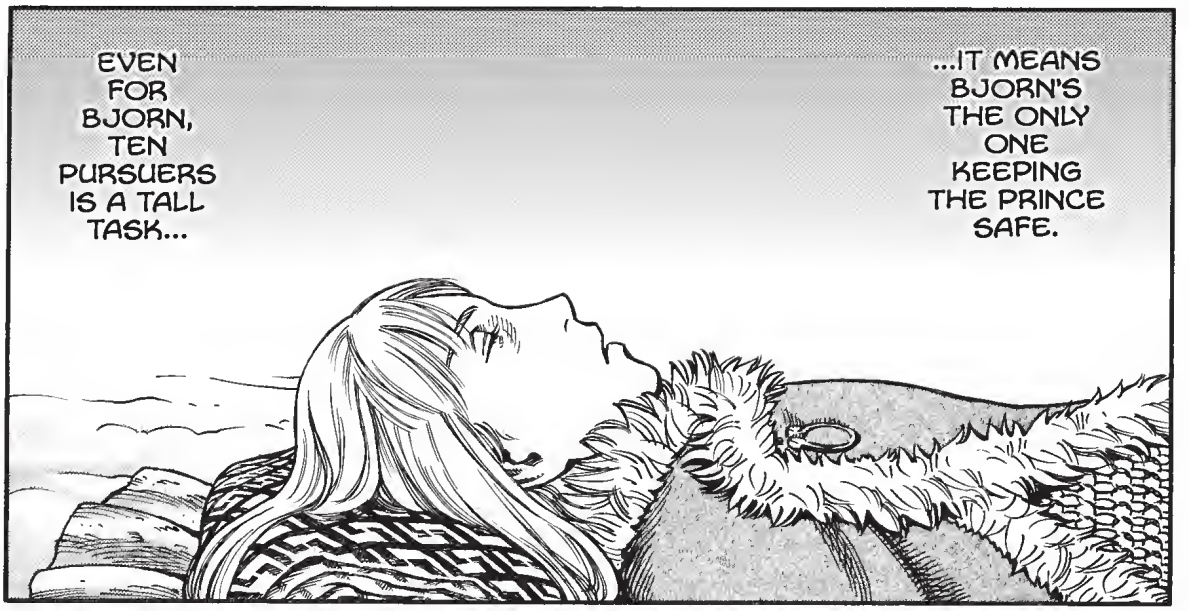
THORS WAS EASILY STRONGER THAN ME!
NOW I WANT YOU TO SHOW ME BEYOND A DOUBT THAT YOU HAVE HIS BLOOD!!

RHH

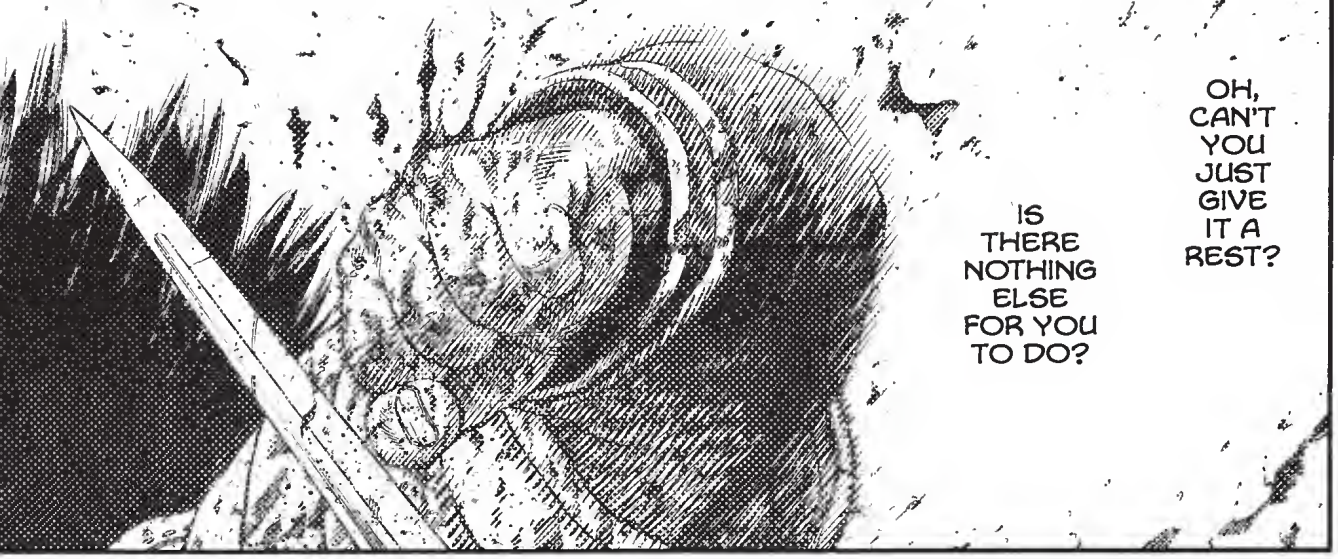
RAAHHH
HNK...
KILL 'IM!

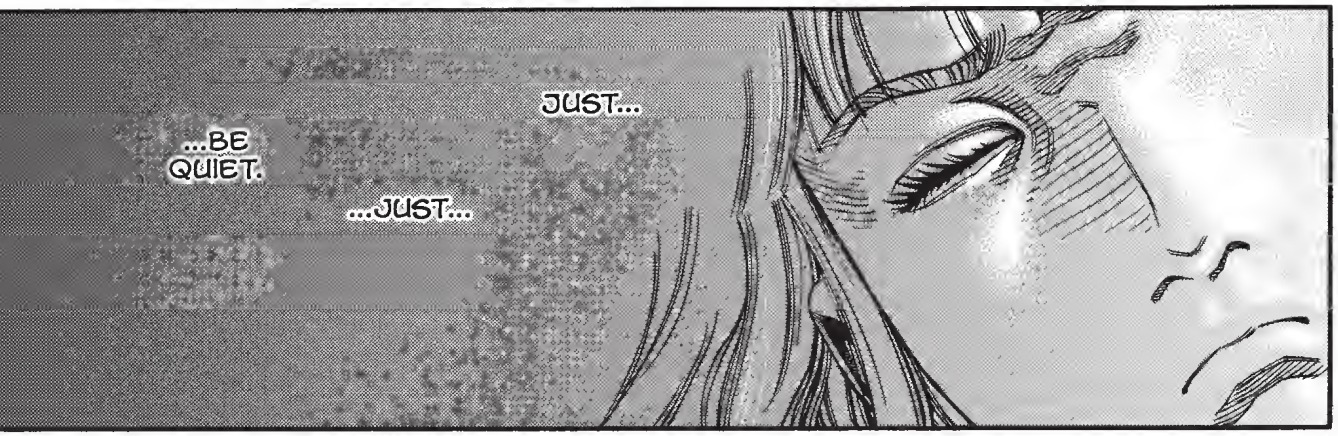
THAT'S A BAD SIGN. IF THORFINN'S *HERE*...

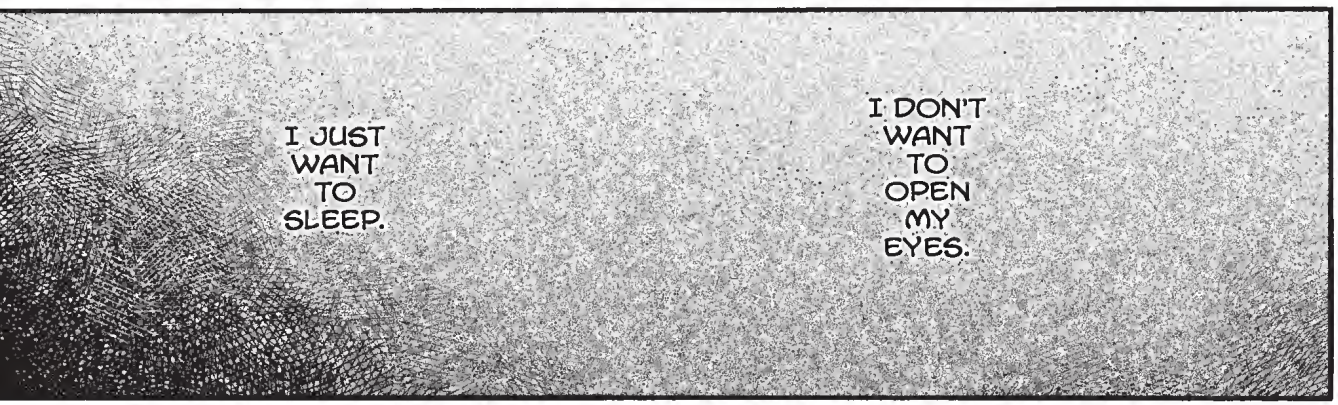

THE STUPID BOY CAME BACK JUST TO GET HIMSELF KILLED...


EVEN FOR BJORN, TEN PURSUERS IS A TALL TASK...
...IT MEANS BJORN'S THE ONLY ONE KEEPING THE PRINCE SAFE.

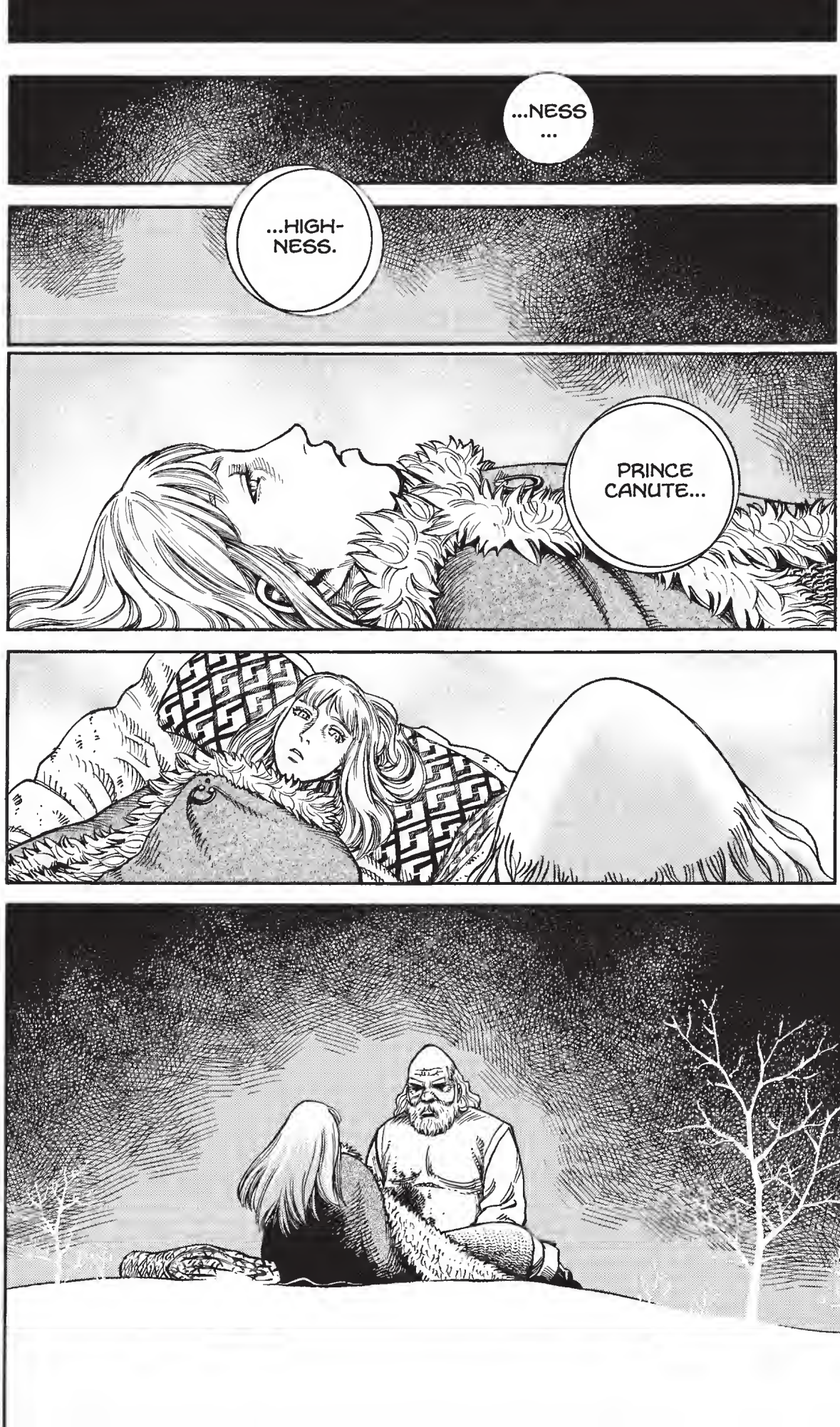
AAAHHH
...I HEAR THE SOUNDS... OF BATTLE NEARBY...
AAHH

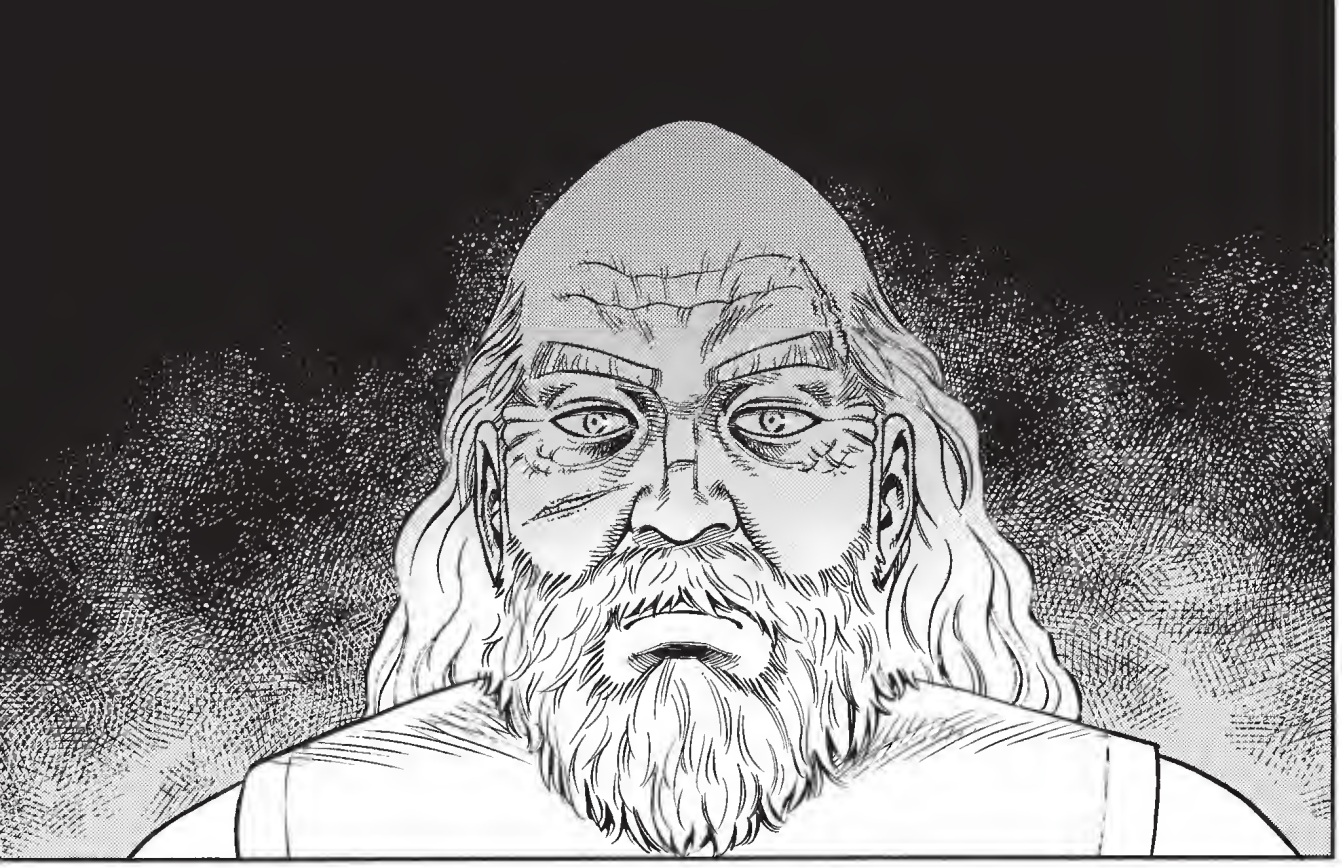

OH, CAN'T YOU JUST GIVE IT A REST?
IS THERE NOTHING ELSE FOR YOU TO DO?

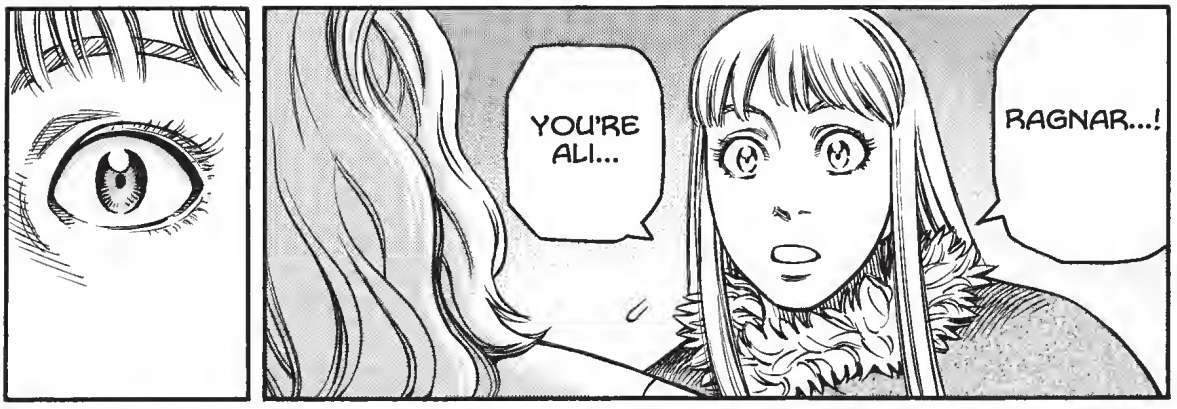

...BE QUIET.
...JUST...
JUST...

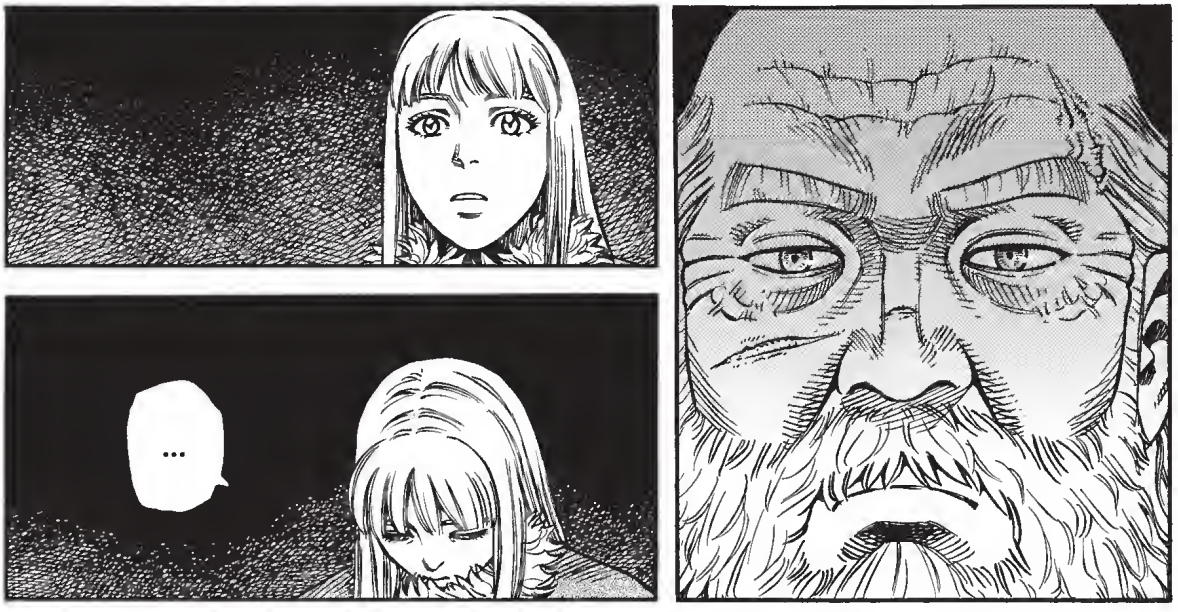

I JUST WANT TO SLEEP.
I DON'T WANT TO OPEN MY EYES.

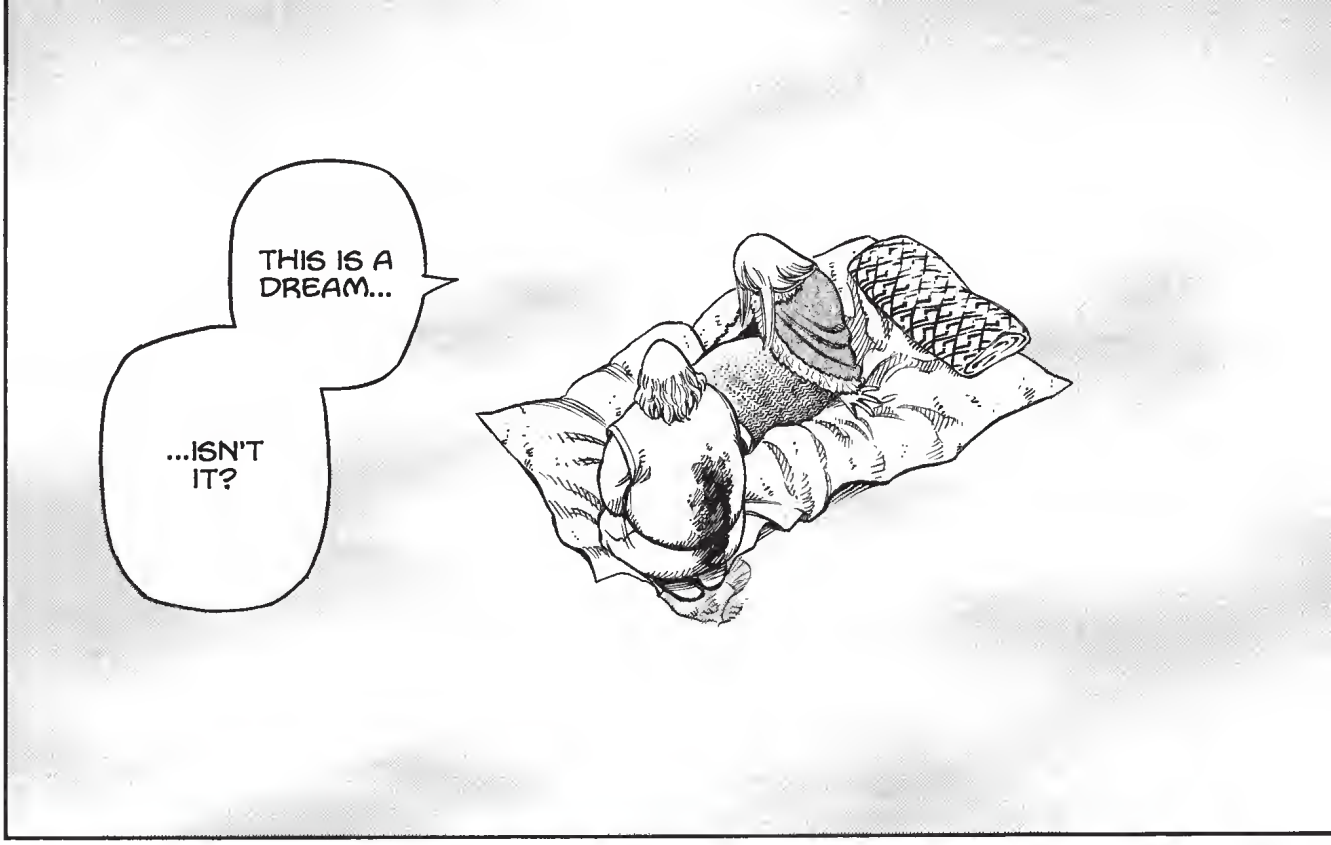
...SLEEP FOREVER...

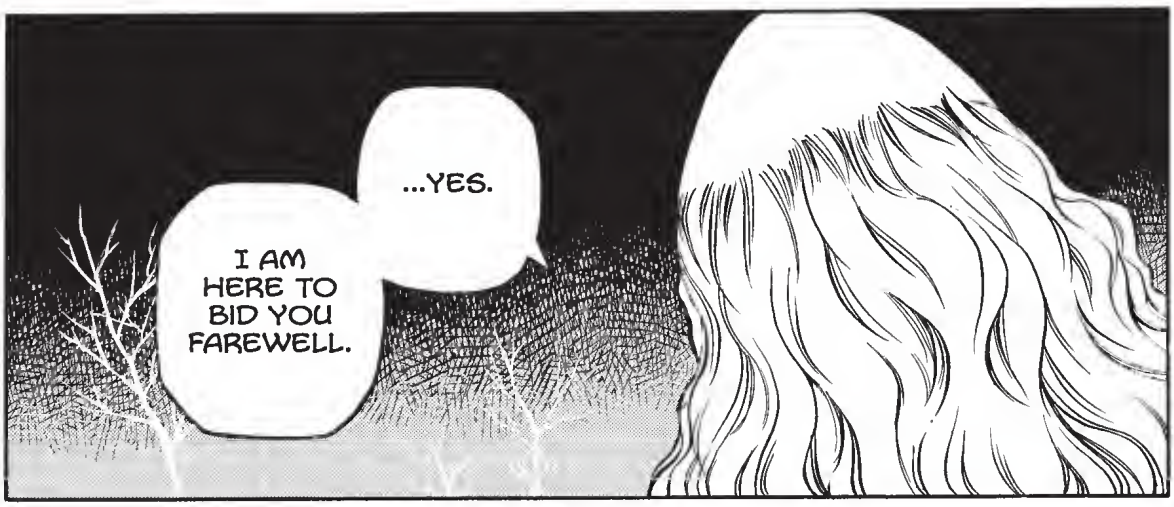

...NESS
...
...HIGH-
NESS.
PRINCE
CANUTE...

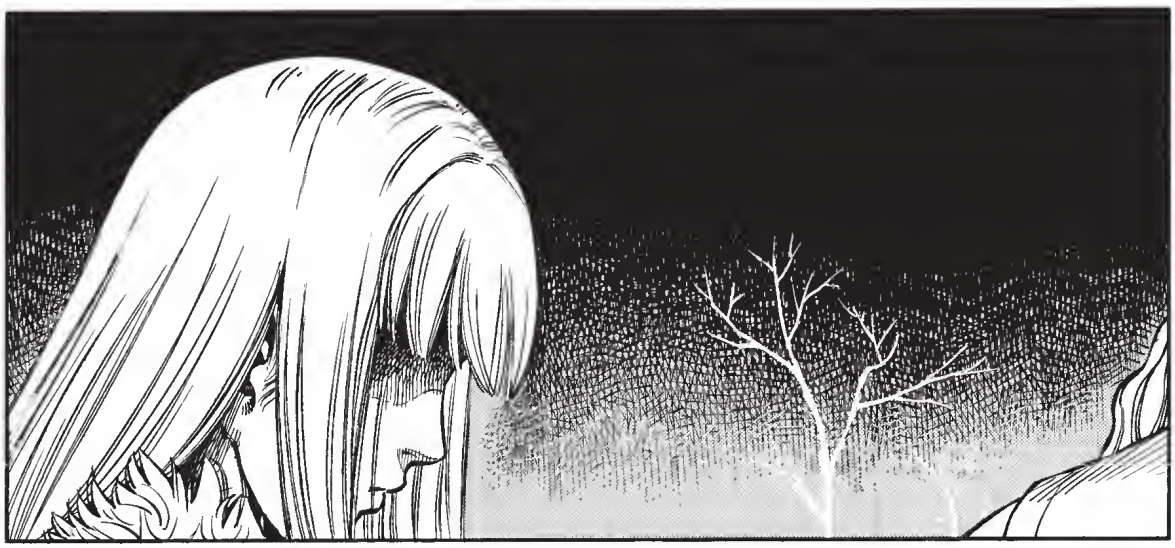



YOU'RE ALI...
RAGNAR...!

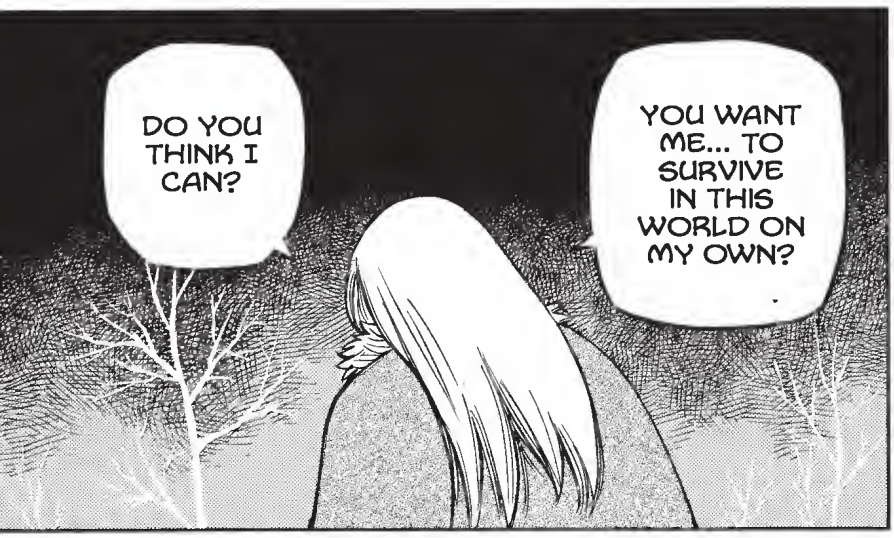

...


THIS IS A DREAM...
...ISN'T IT?

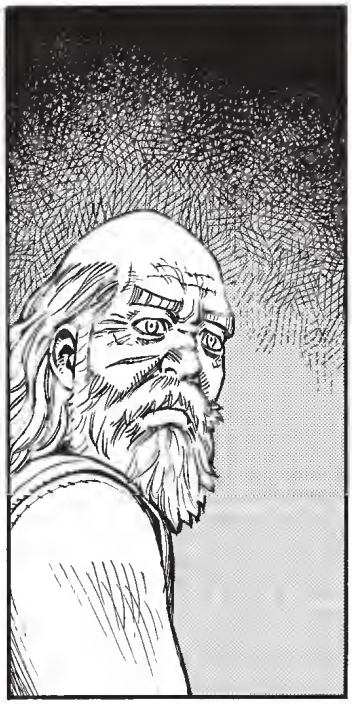

...YES.
I AM HERE TO BID YOU FAREWELL.

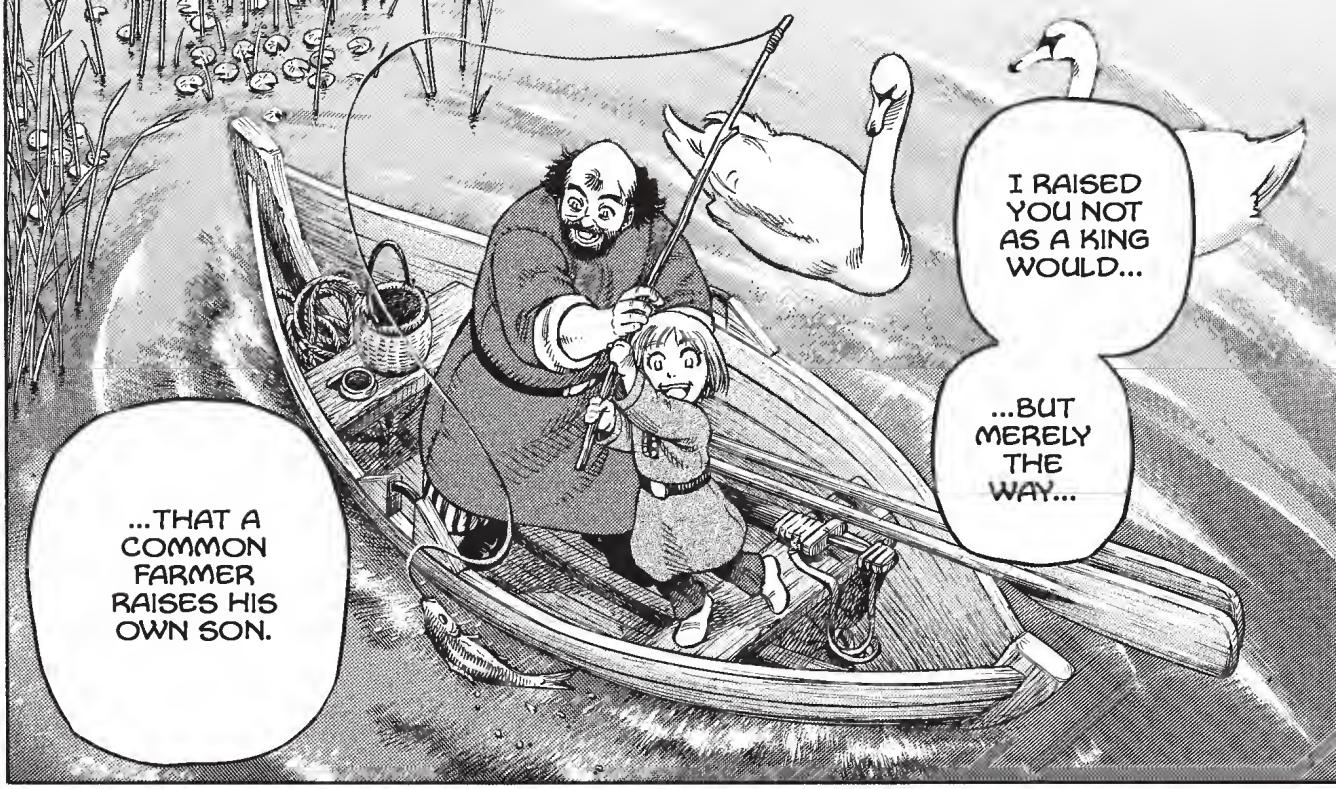


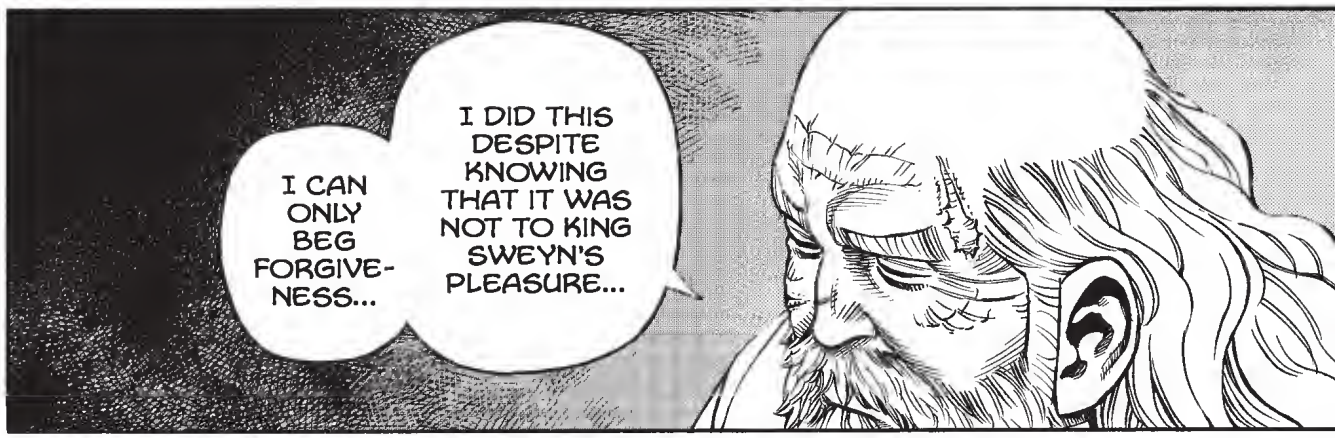
ARE YOU PASSING?
LEAVING ME BEHIND...?


DO YOU THINK I CAN?
YOU WANT ME... TO SURVIVE IN THIS WORLD ON MY OWN?

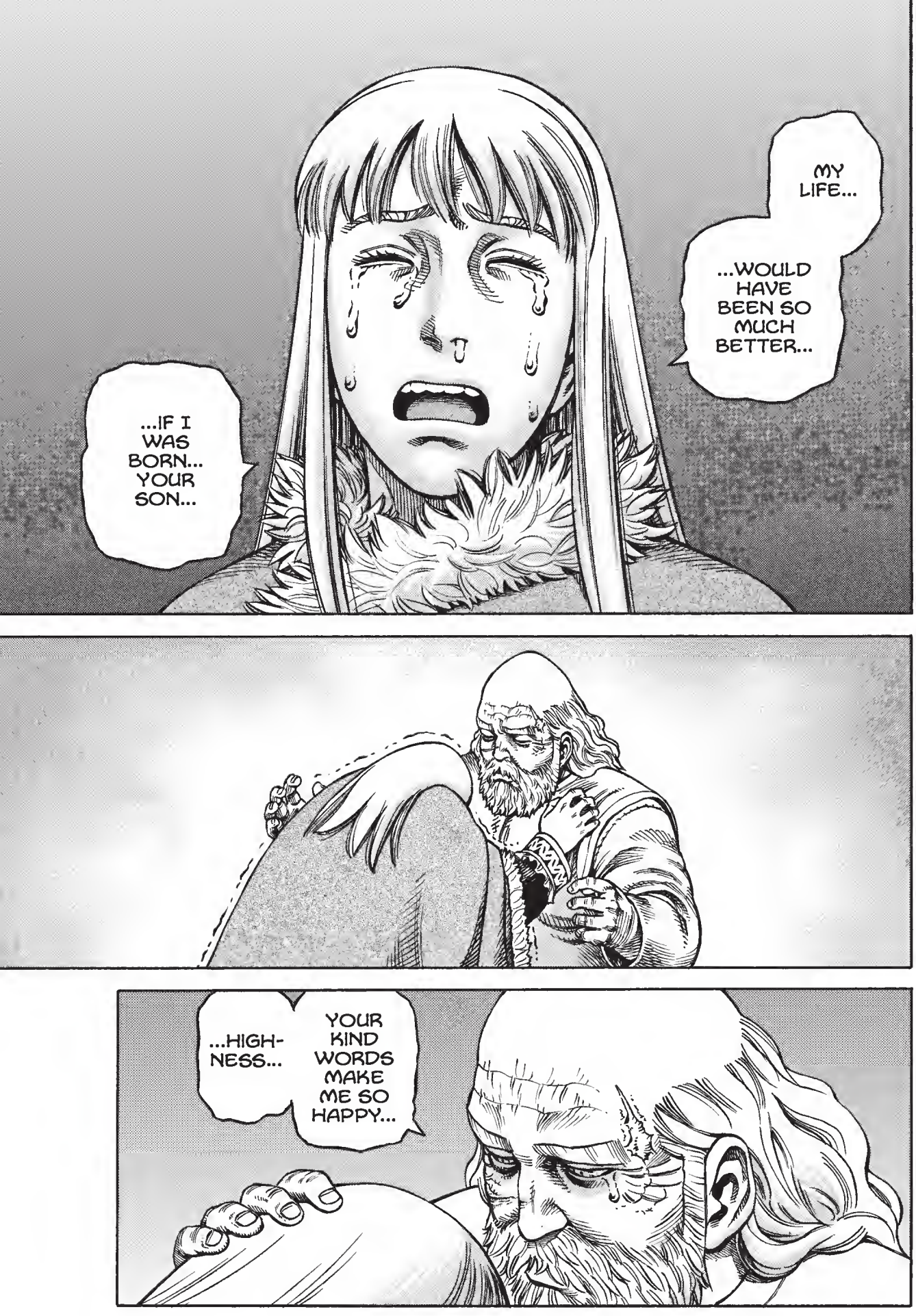
...I WAS NOT FIT...
...TO BE YOUR INSTRUCTOR.



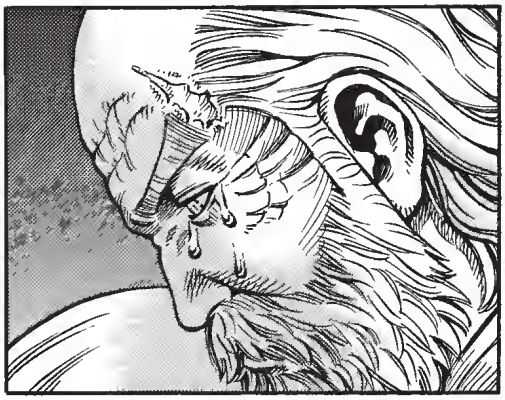

I RAISED YOU NOT AS A KING WOULD...
...BUT MERELY THE WAY...
...THAT A COMMON FARMER RAISES HIS OWN SON.

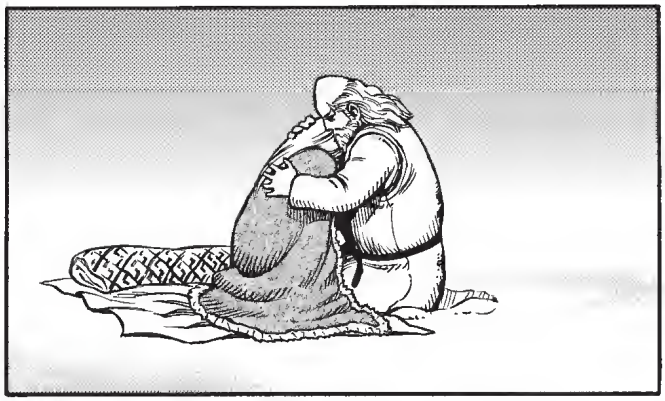

I DID THIS DESPITE KNOWING THAT IT WAS NOT TO KING SWEYN'S PLEASURE...
I CAN ONLY BEG FORGIVE-NESS...

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?! YOU CARED FAR MORE FOR MY WISHES THAN MY FATHER EVER BOTHERED TO!
I NEVER...
I NEVER WANTED TO BE BORN A PRINCE!


...IF I WAS BORN... YOUR SON...
MY LIFE...
...WOULD HAVE BEEN SO MUCH BETTER...
...HIGH-NESS...
YOUR KIND WORDS MAKE ME SO HAPPY...

I LOVE YOU.
DON'T GO.

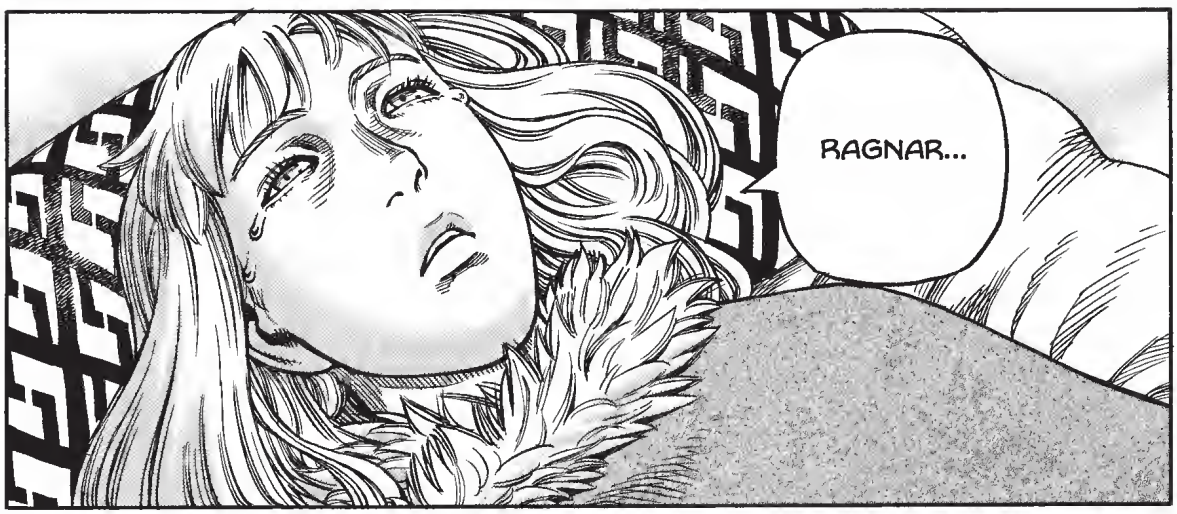




SHH...

I'M SURE YOU HAVE ALREADY REALIZED THIS.
THERE ARE THINGS...
...TO BE LEARNED THROUGH LOSS.
THE TIME HAS COME...
...FOR YOU TO WAKE.
I AM NOTHING MORE THAN A DREAM.

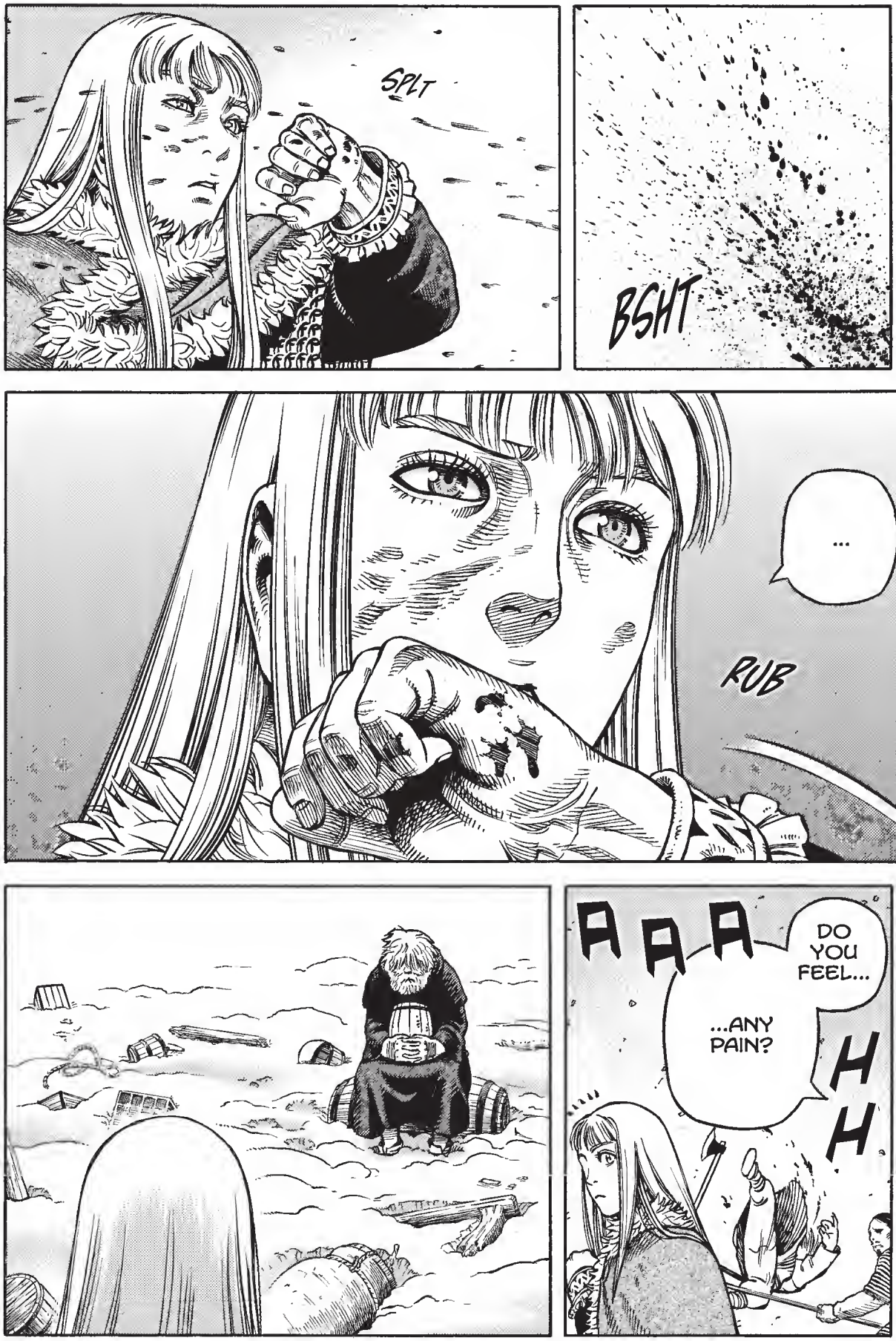
BE OF GOOD HEALTH...
...HIGH-NESS...


RAGNAR...

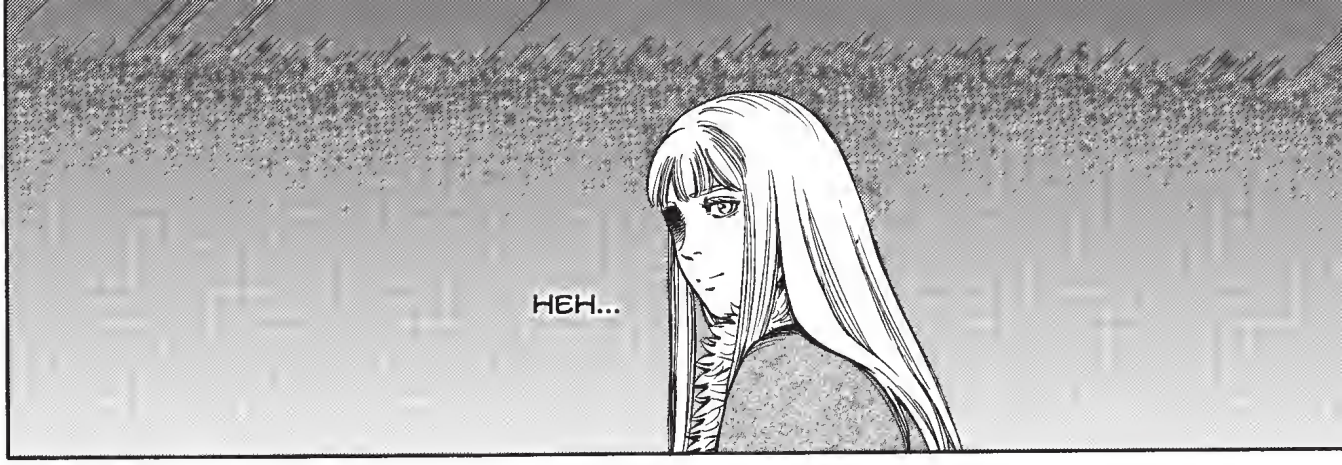
SNIF...
RAAHH

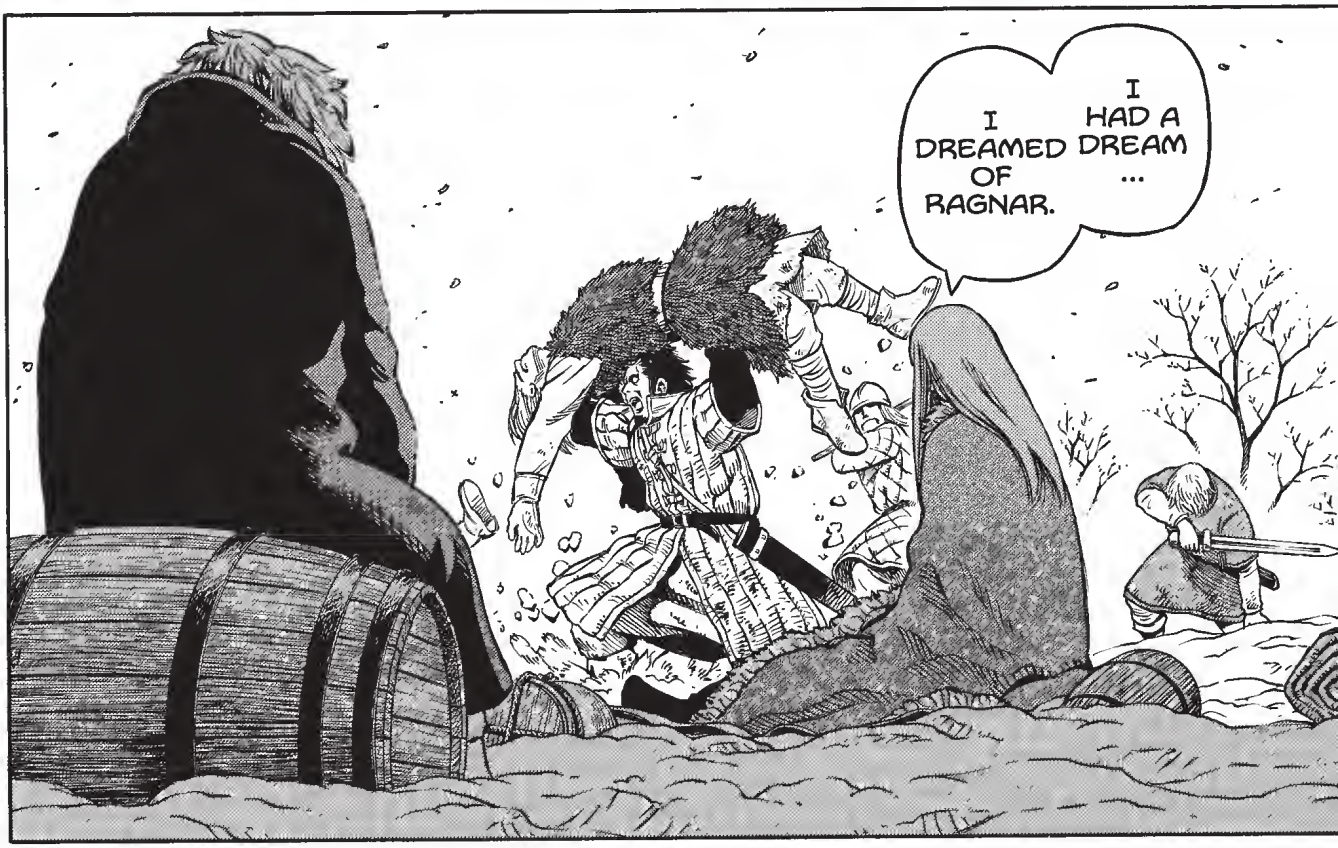
KRUAGH
GA
CHONK

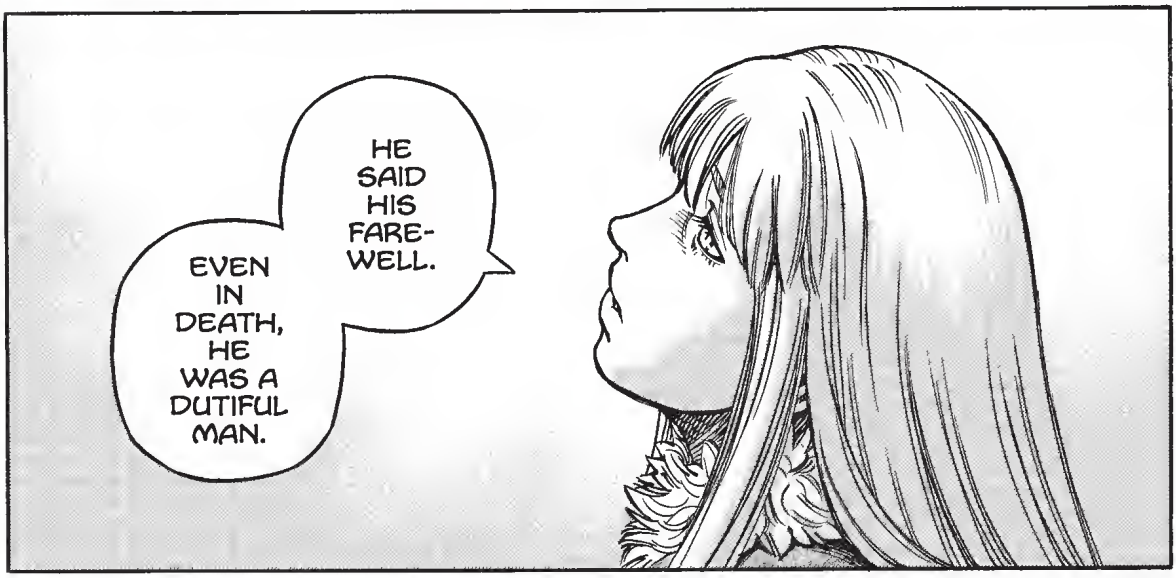
GRAARGH
RUSH HIM TOGETHER !!
QUIT COWERING LIKE BABIES! HE'S ONLY ONE MAN!!
AAAHHH
RRAGH
GASHK


SPLT
BSHT
...
RUB
AAA
DO YOU FEEL...
...ANY PAIN?
HH

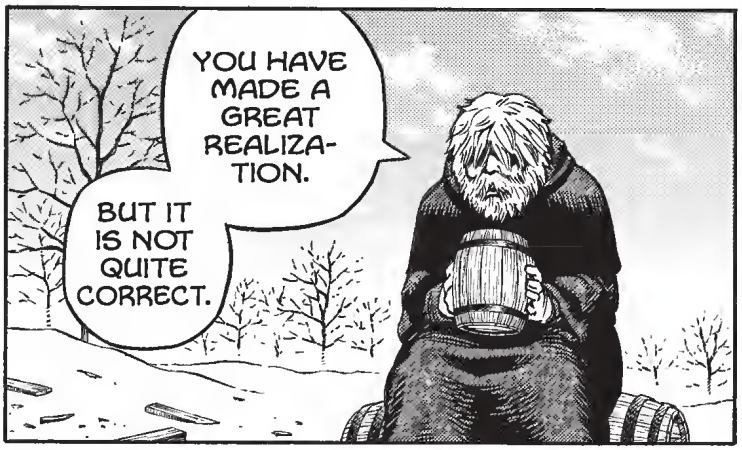
THEY ARE FIGHTING OVER *YOU*, YOUR HIGHNESS.
YOU WILL BELONG TO THE VICTOR.
YOU ARE A HOLY MAN.
WHY DO YOU NOT STOP THE BATTLE?
IS THERE ANY WAY TO STOP THEM?
GLURK
GLURK
LET THOSE WHO SEEK DEATH FIND IT.

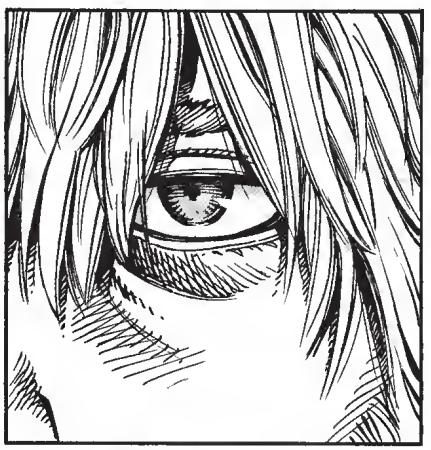

HEH...

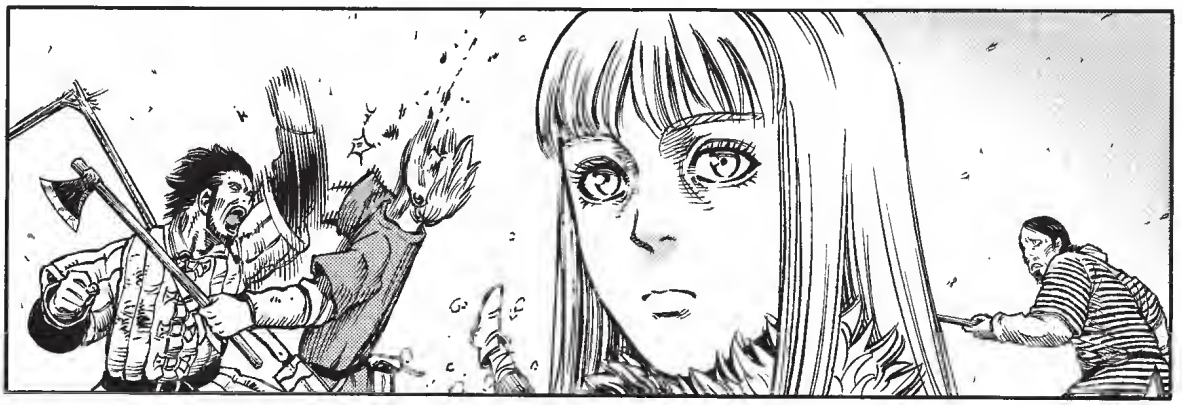

I HAD A DREAM ...
I DREAMED OF RAGNAR.

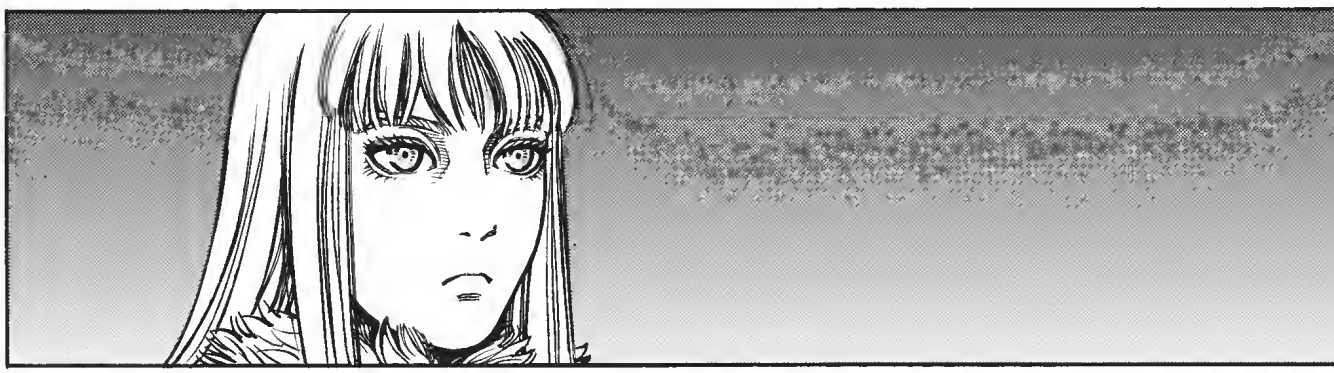

HE SAID HIS FARE-WELL.
EVEN IN DEATH, HE WAS A DUTIFUL MAN.

WITH HIM GONE...
...THERE IS NO ONE LEFT IN THIS WORLD WHO LOVES ME.

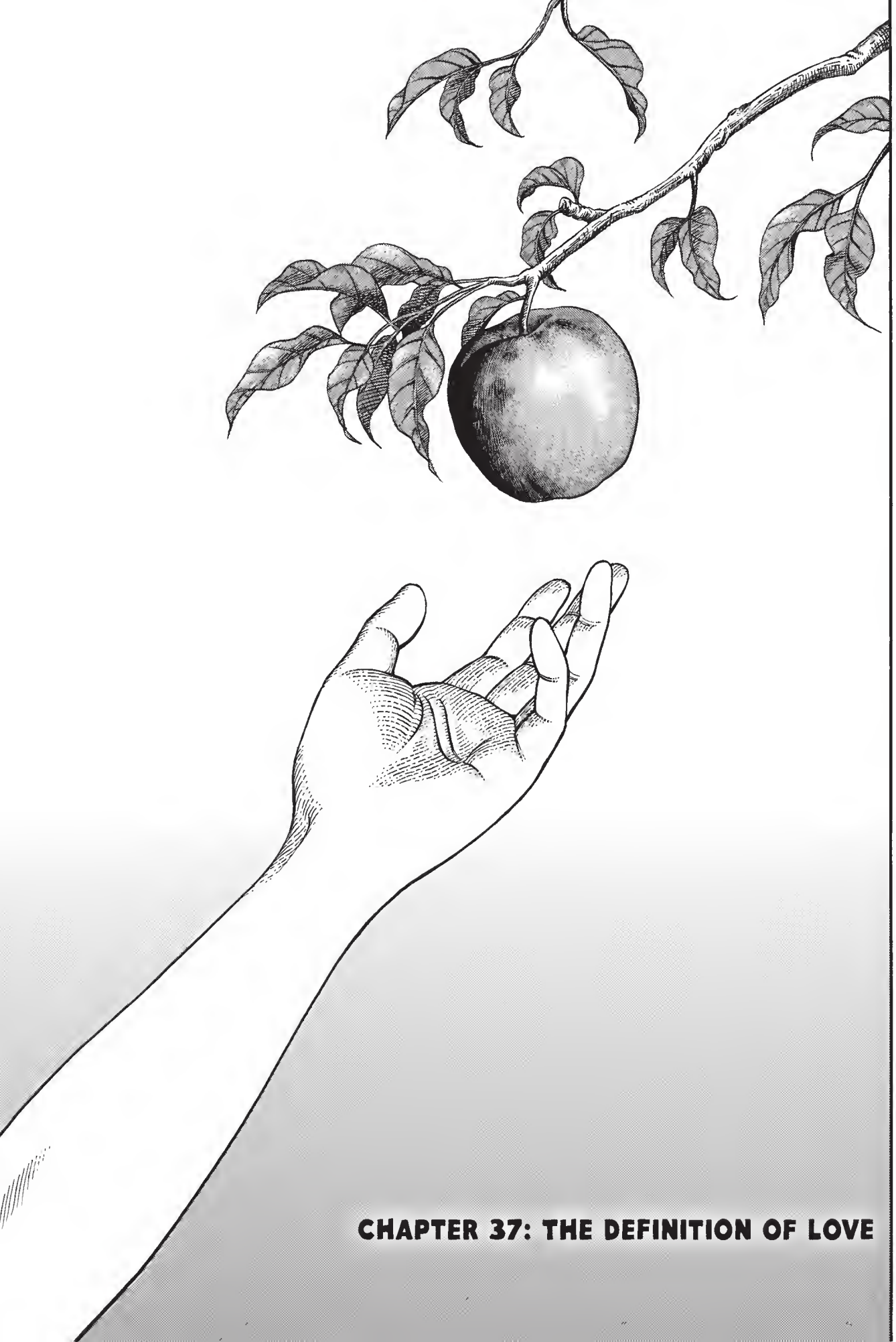

YOU HAVE MADE A GREAT REALIZA-TION.
BUT IT IS NOT QUITE CORRECT.





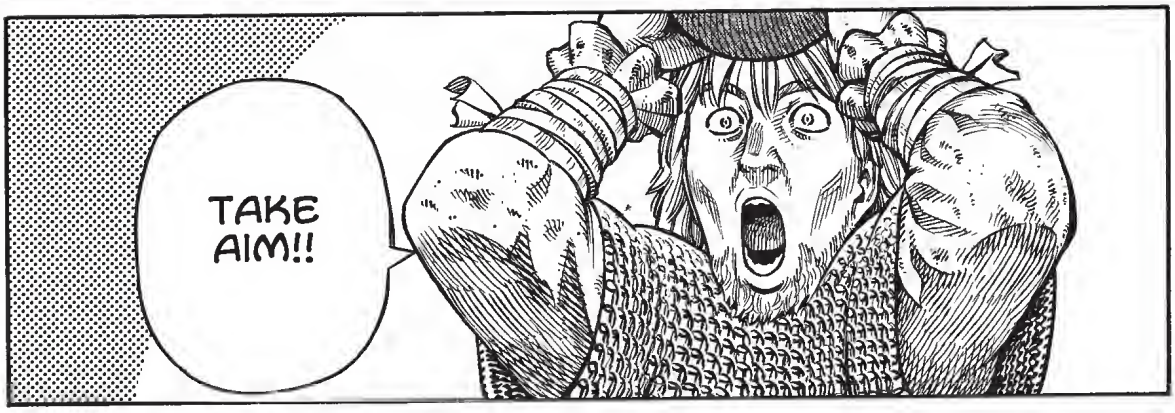


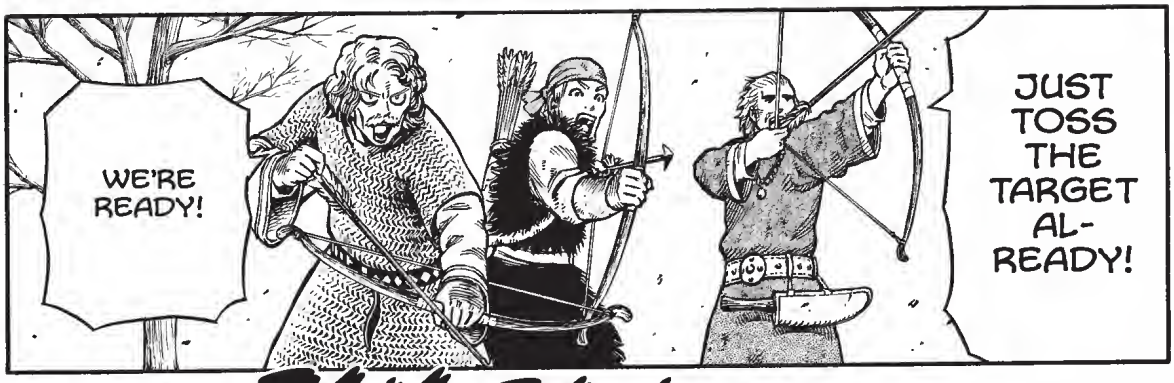
CHAPTER 36 - END

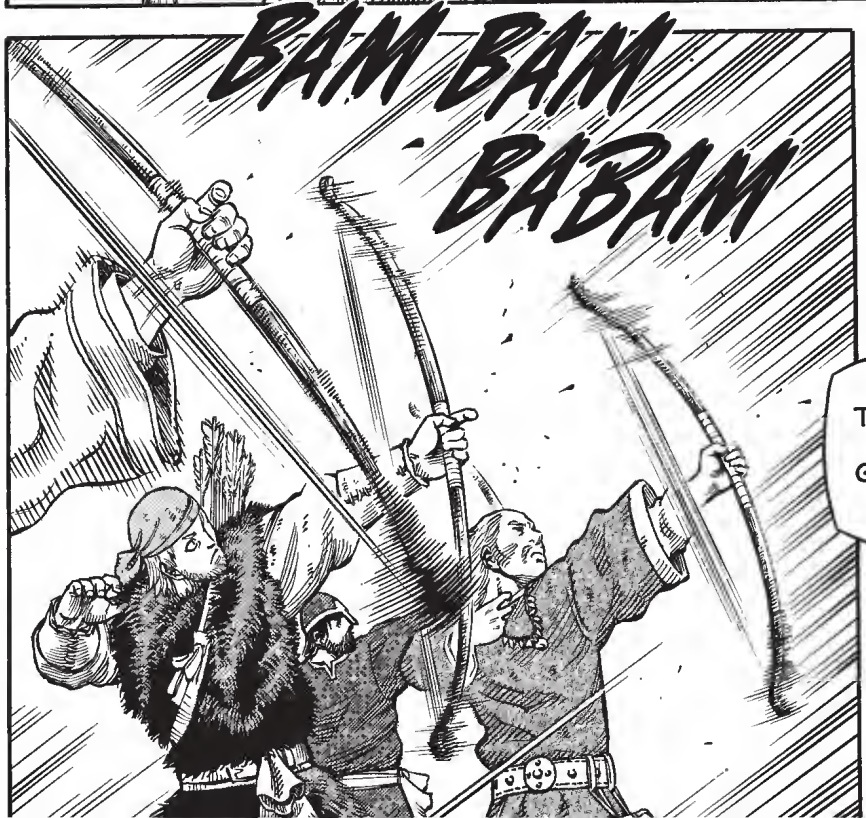


CHAPTER 37: THE DEFINITION OF LOVE

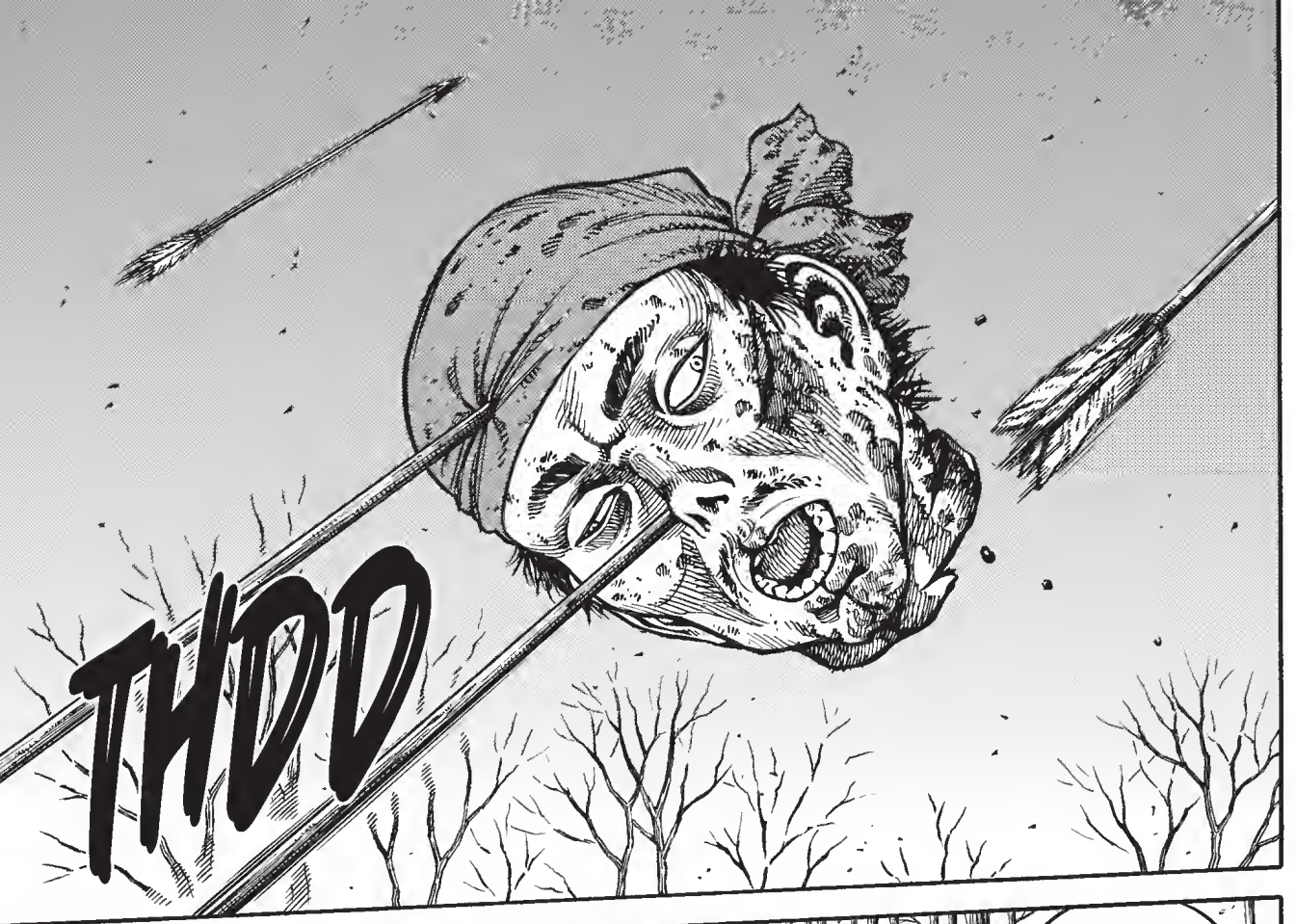
FLAP FLAP
TWIP...
WA HA HA
BA HA HA

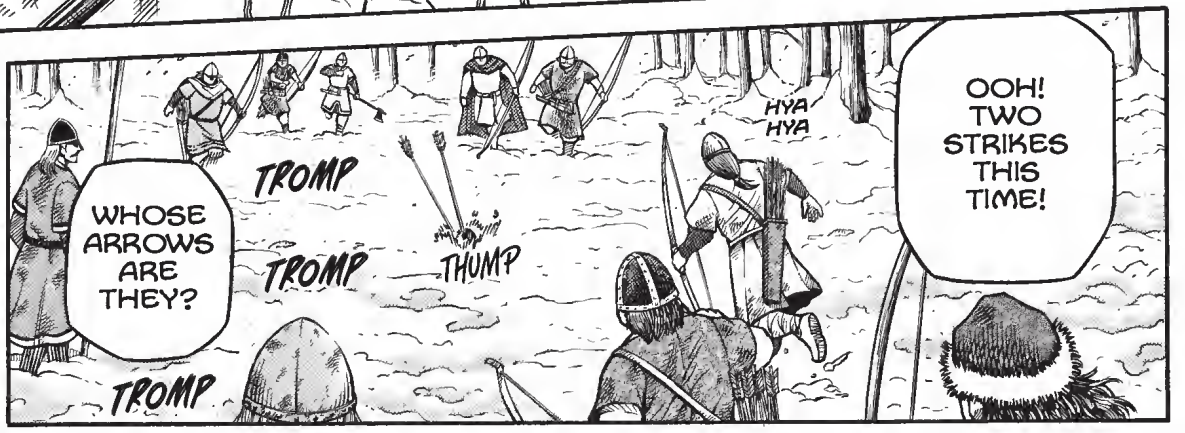

TAKE AIM!!

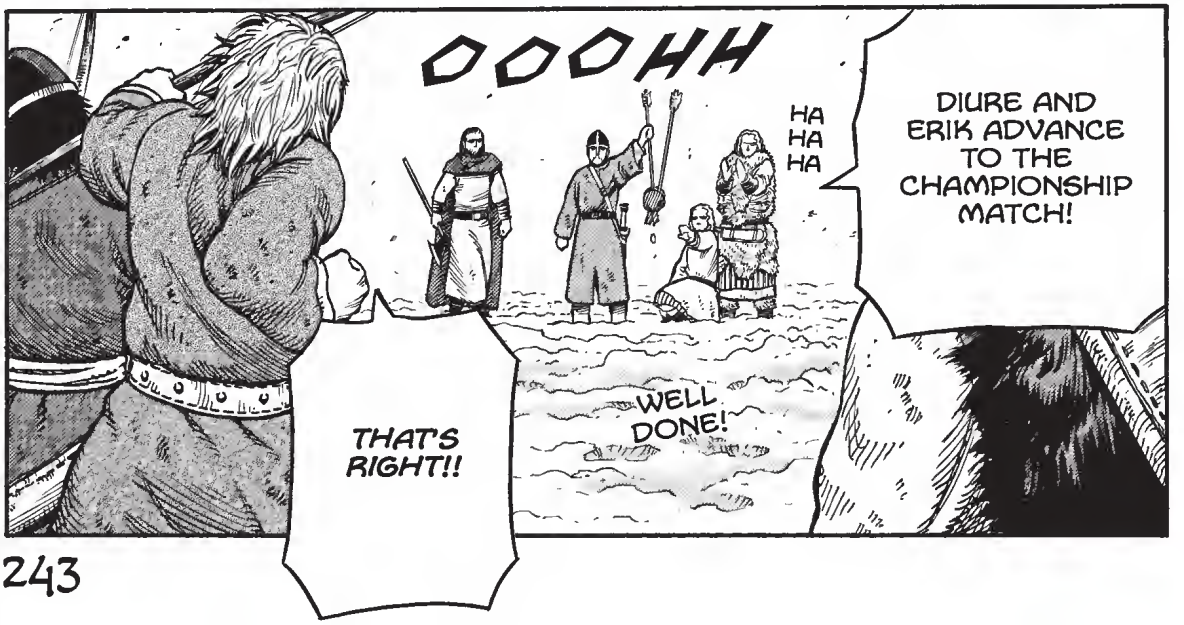

WE'RE READY!
JUST TOSS THE TARGET AL-READY!


BAM BAM BABAM

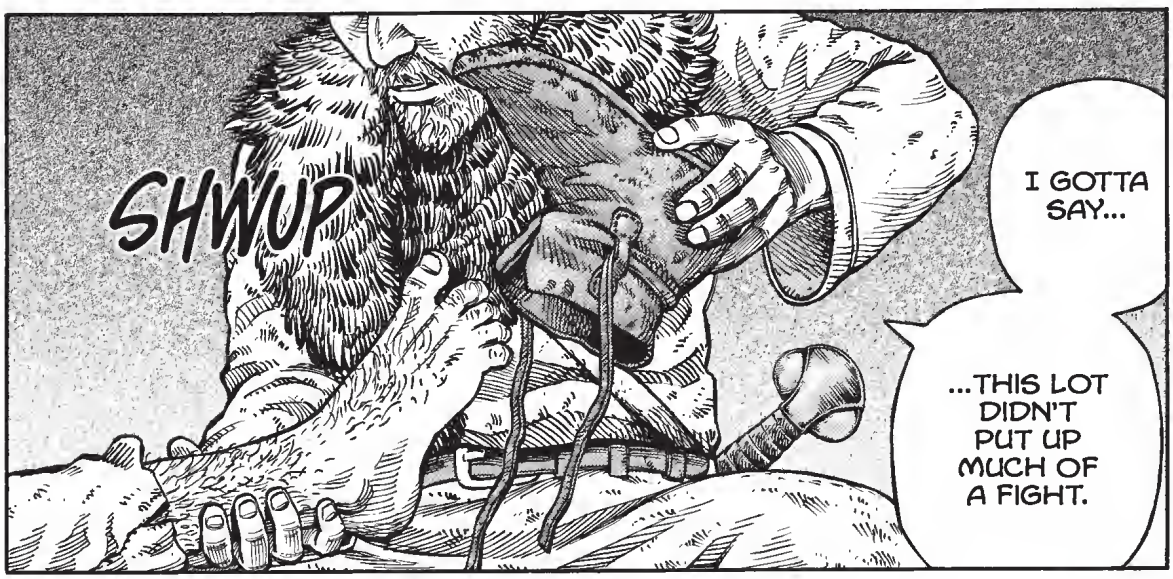
FWOOP
AND
THERE IT GOES!


THDD

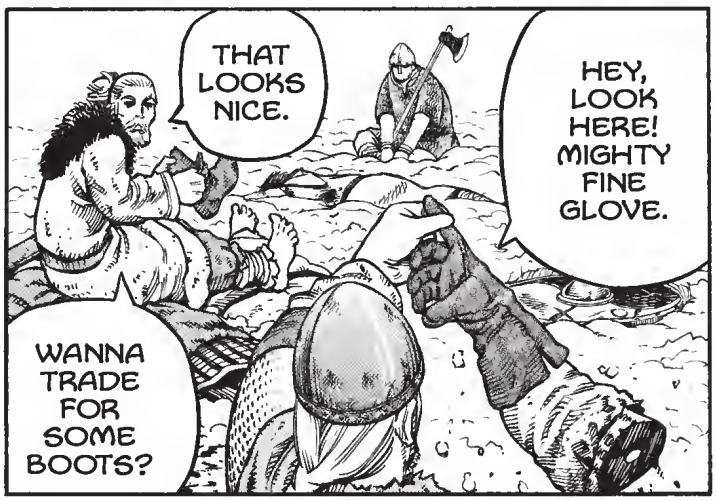

WHOSE ARROWS ARE THEY?
TROMP
TROMP
TROMP
THUMP
HYA HYA
OOH! TWO STRIKES THIS TIME!

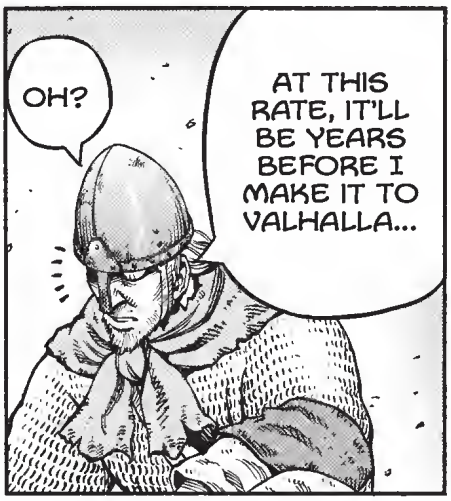

OOOHH
HA HA HA
DIURE AND ERIK ADVANCE TO THE CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH!
WELL DONE!
THAT'S RIGHT!!

BETS ON DIURE, OVER HERE! MAKE IT QUICK!


SHWUP
I GOTTA SAY...
...THIS LOT DIDN'T PUT UP MUCH OF A FIGHT.

IT'S HARD TO FIND REALLY TOUGH ONES.
NO KIDDIN'.
HMM, A BIT SMALL.
DID WE EVEN LOSE A SINGLE MAN?
HRK
HEY, FOUND A GOLD RING!


THAT LOOKS NICE.
HEY, LOOK HERE! MIGHTY FINE GLOVE.
WANNA TRADE FOR SOME BOOTS?


OH?
AT THIS RATE, IT'LL BE YEARS BEFORE I MAKE IT TO VALHALLA...

RAHHH
WHAT ARE THEY ALL EXCITED ABOUT OVER THERE?
THEY'RE IGNORING THE SPOILS...
WAIT, IS THE BOSS STILL FIGHTING?

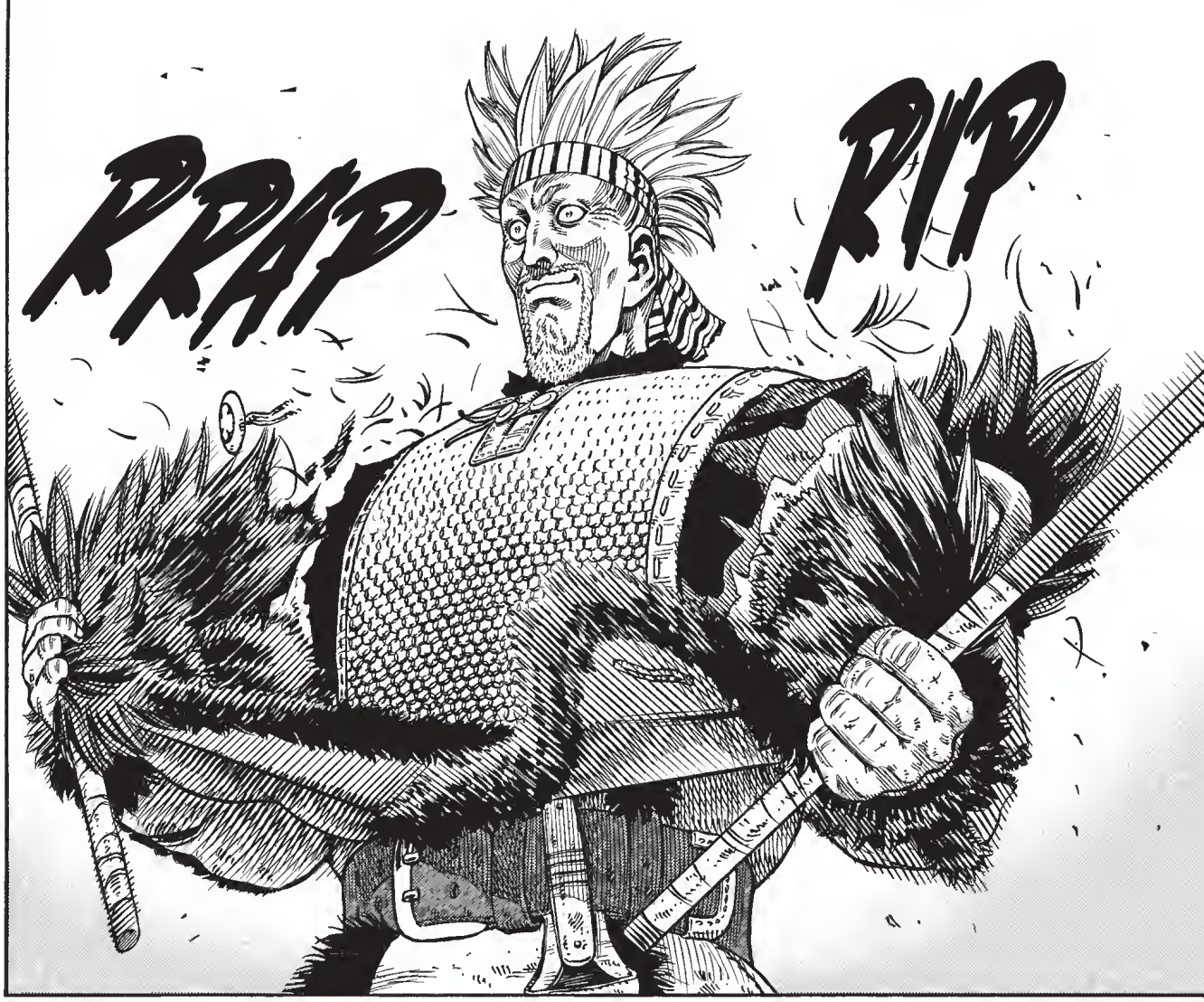
RAHHH
ANYONE FOUND A LEFT ARM AROUND HERE?
BUT I DON'T SEE THE OTHER ONE.

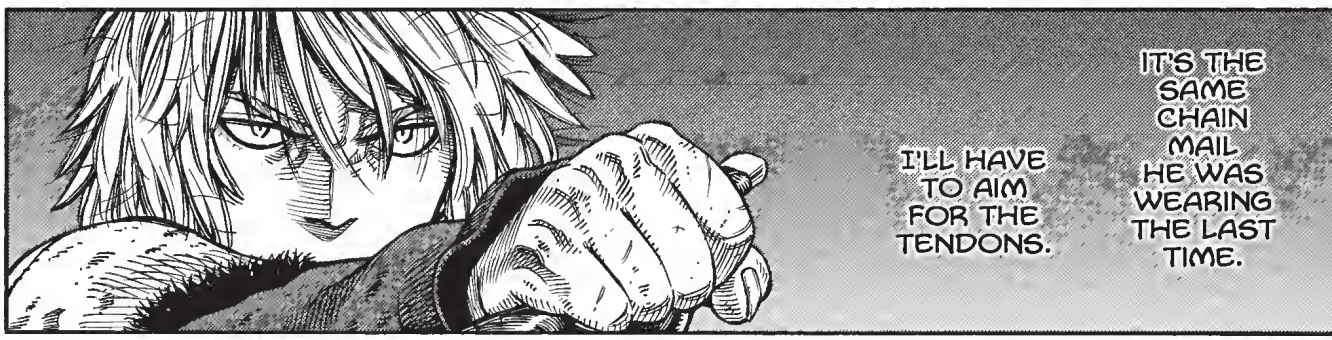
AAHHH
WELL, WHAT ARE THEY ALL SO EXCITED ABOUT, THEN?
CAN'T BE.
HIS FIGHTS NEVER LAST MORE THAN A FEW SECONDS.
RAAAHHHHH
...
HEY NOW, JUST WHAT'S GOING ON OVER THERE?!
MY THOUGHTS ENTIRELY.
I THINK I'LL GO TAKE A QUICK GANDER.
RAHHH

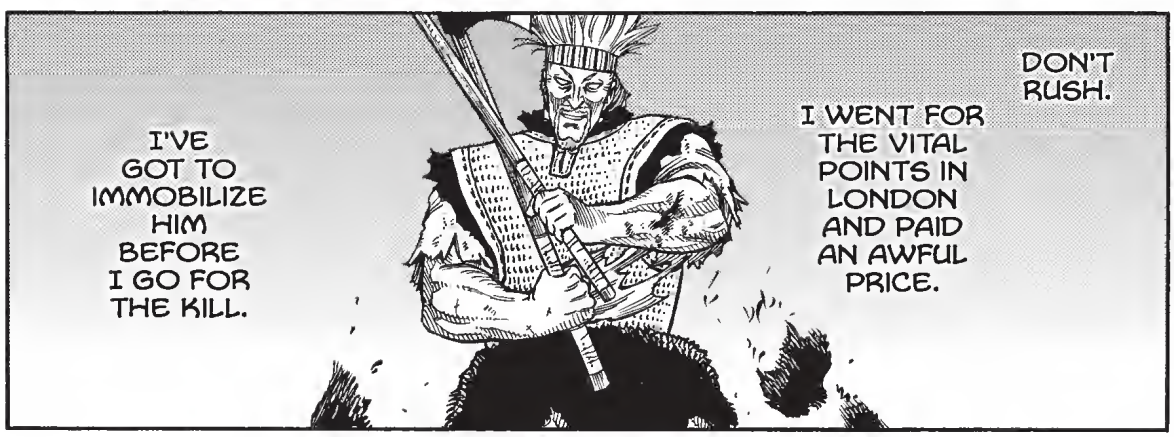
KILL 'IM ALREADY!!
STOP RUNNING, BOY!!
C'MON, CAPTAIN!!
AAHHHHH
YOU'RE COSTING ME, BOY!!
HFF
HFF
WOULDJA JUST DIE ALREADY?!
DRIP...

OHH HHH

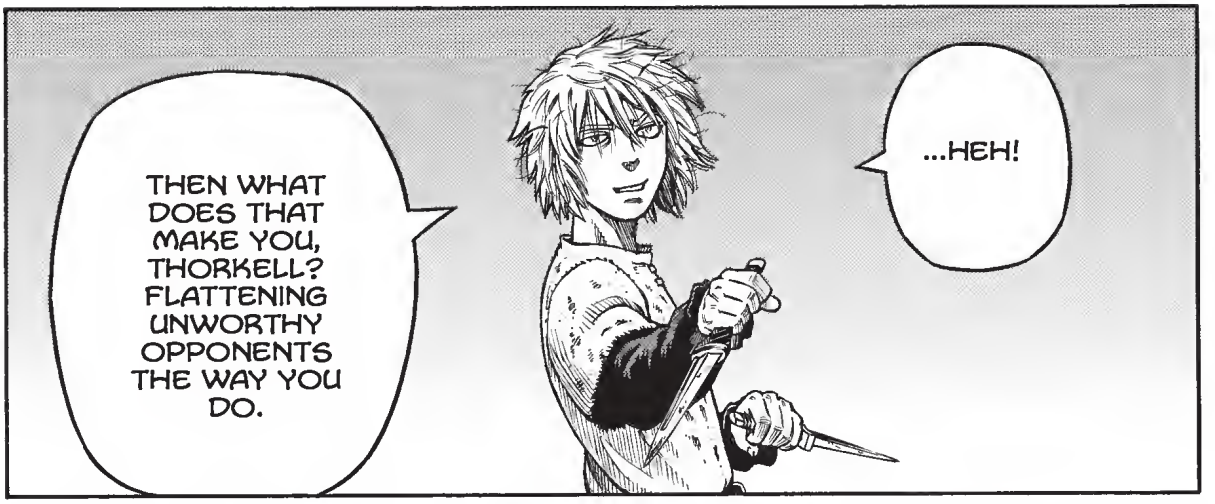
RAAAHHH
HE'S BEING ABSO-LUTELY SAVAGED!!
BY A LITTLE KID!!
CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS? LOOK AT THE BOSS...
I COULD COUNT THE NUMBER OF MY MEN THAT COULD STAND TOE-TO-TOE WITH YOU ON ONE HAND.
VERY GOOD, THORFINN.
HRRP


RRAP
RIP


IT'S THE SAME CHAIN MAIL HE WAS WEARING THE LAST TIME.
I'LL HAVE TO AIM FOR THE TENDONS.

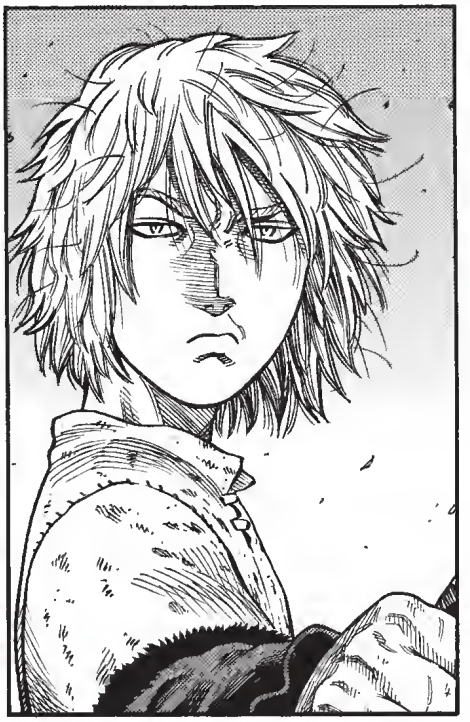

DON'T RUSH.
I WENT FOR THE VITAL POINTS IN LONDON AND PAID AN AWFUL PRICE.
I'VE GOT TO IMMOBILIZE HIM BEFORE I GO FOR THE KILL.

...
RAHHH
AAAHHH
...YOU'RE A GREAT FIGHTER, THORFINN, BUT YOUR SWORDWORK IS RATHER... HMM...
THE PROBLEM IS...
...MUNDANE? IS THE WORD I'M LOOKING FOR.
H
HAVEN'T YOU EVER FELT THAT WAY, THORFINN?
YOU'RE MISSING SOMETHING THAT WILL COMPLETE YOU AS A WARRIOR.


...HEH!
THEN WHAT DOES THAT MAKE YOU, THORKELL? FLATTENING UNWORTHY OPPONENTS THE WAY YOU DO.

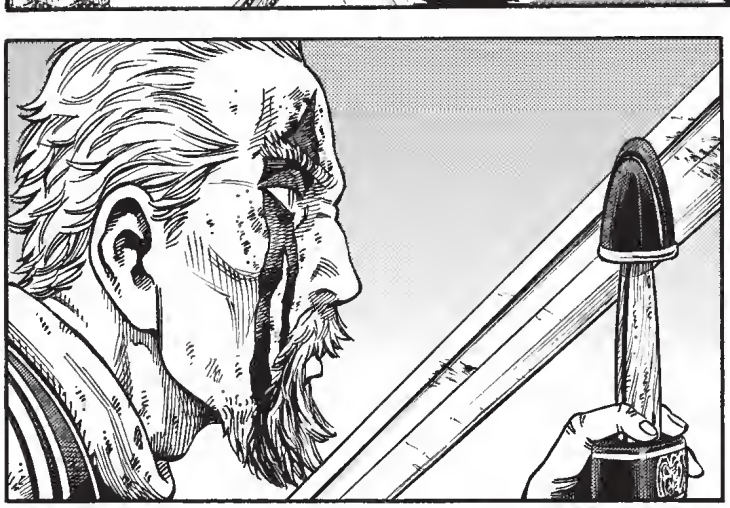
EXACTLY. I'M MISSING SOME-THING, TOO.
RUB RUB
I WAS HOPING THAT I COULD LEARN WHATEVER IT IS FROM THE SON OF THORS...
...BUT MAYBE I WAS OVERLY OPTIMIS-TIC...

TELL ME, THORFINN.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?



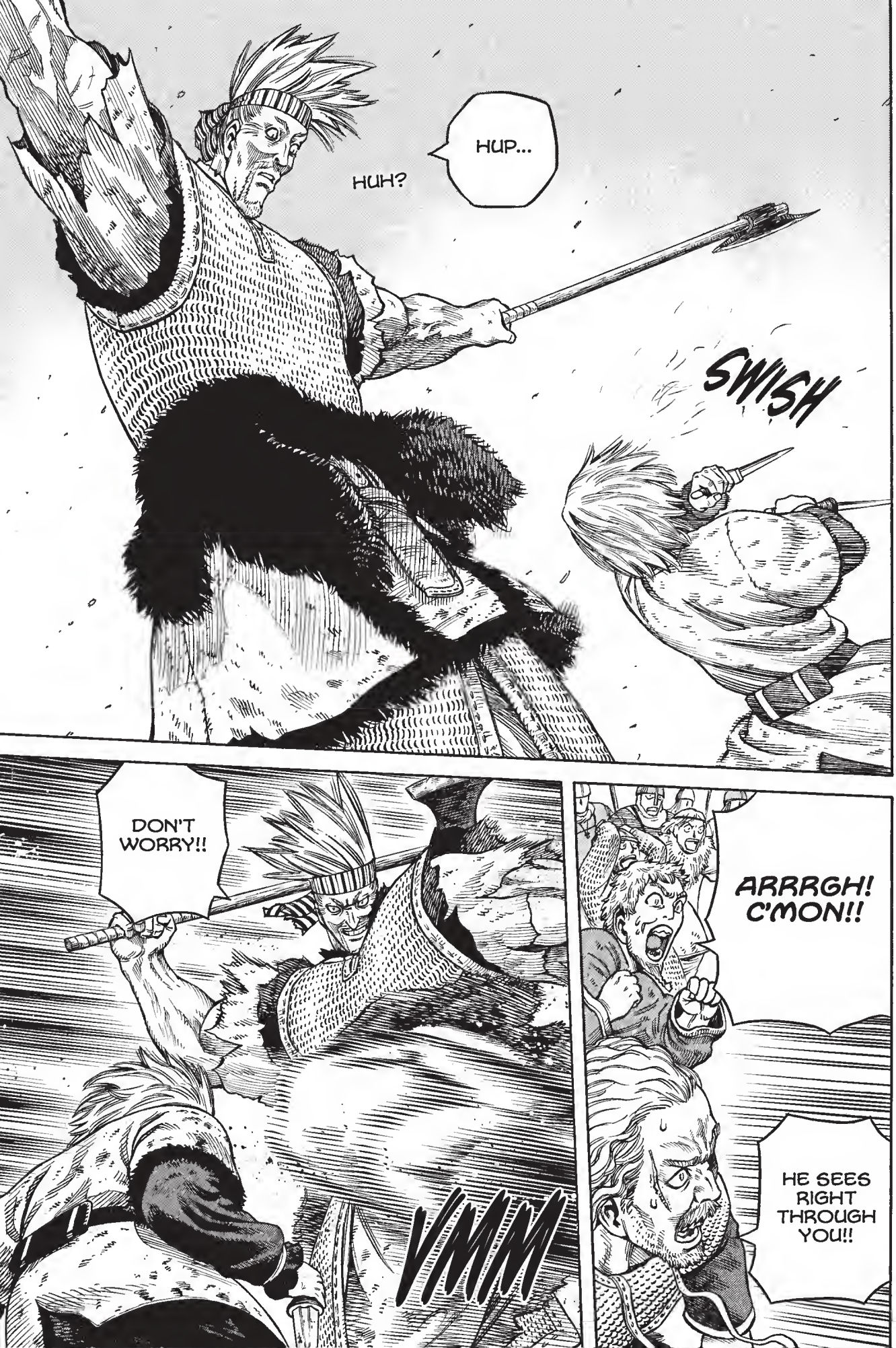
WHAT MAKES A TRUE WARRIOR?
!!

THUD
THUD



RAAAHH
SHIT!
STOP THINKING! THAT'S WHAT HE WANTS!!
HE'S TRYING TO CONFUSE ME AND MAKE ME DROP MY GUARD!!
GASP
NO MATTER. I WASN'T EXPECTING MUCH ANYWAY.
...SO YOU DON'T KNOW.
STOP TRYING TO MESS WITH ME!!
LEAP
SNAP

SH...
ZSH
ZSH
ZSH
HMP!!
VVF


HUP...
HUH?
SWISH
DON'T WORRY!!
VAAAM
ARRRGH! C'MON!!
HE SEES RIGHT THROUGH YOU!!

ZIPP
FWOM
FWOM
FWOM
FWOM
YEOW !!
ZRSH
AAHHH

HRRN!
GAHH!
PSHT
LEAP
FWOOSH
SHIT!!
STILL TOO SHALLOW! I NEED TO TAKE OUT AN ELBOW OR KNEE!
ZSHH
SHH...
ZSH
ZSH
ZSH

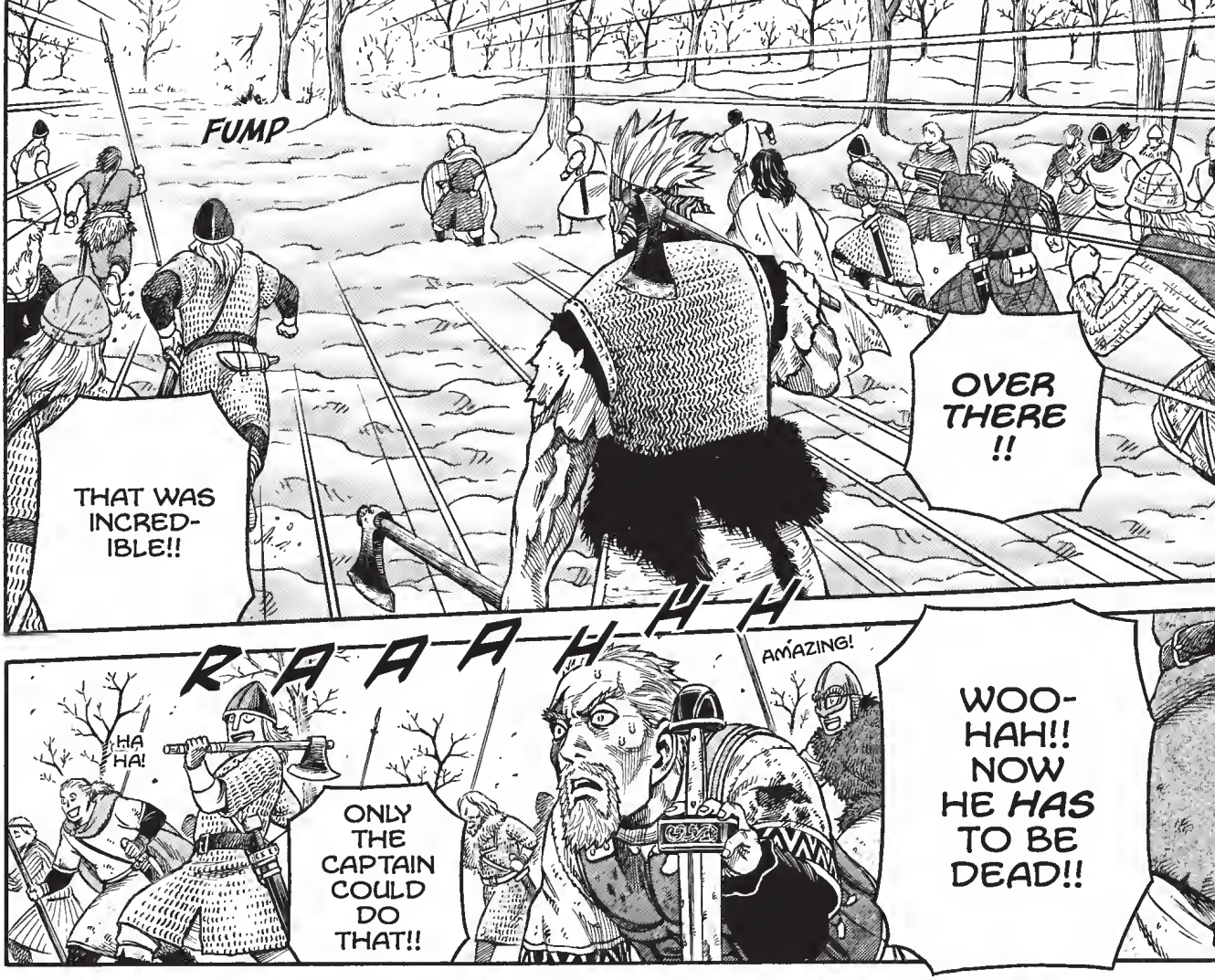
DAHHHH!!
C'MON, CAPTAIN !!
YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE A DIFFERENT TACK!!
I TOLD YOU, HE'S SEEING RIGHT THROUGH YOU!!
SHIVER
?!
GRIN
NMFH !!
ISC HAU

!!
SHAAA
BMFF
BWAPF!

HUH?
WHERE'D HE GO?
...!!
GLINT
GLINT
GLINT
SHAAAA
MURMUR...
THERE HE IS.
MURMUR...
HUH?
HEY!
SO YOU BOUNCED OFF MY KICK TO BRACE AGAINST THE IMPACT!
CLEVER MOVE!

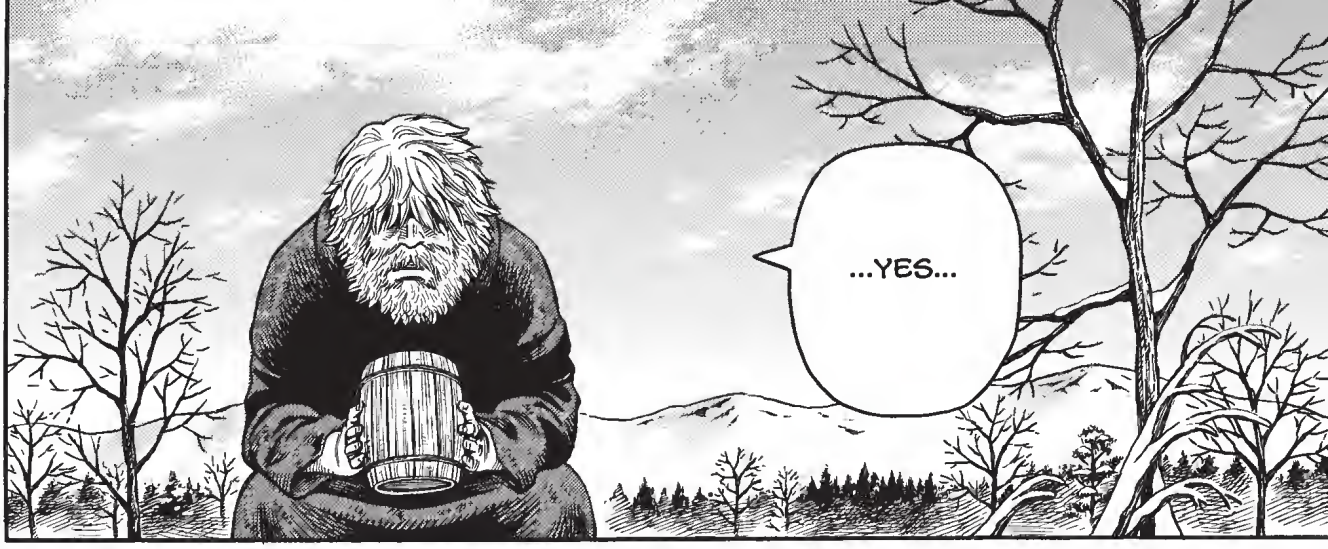
WHAT
?!

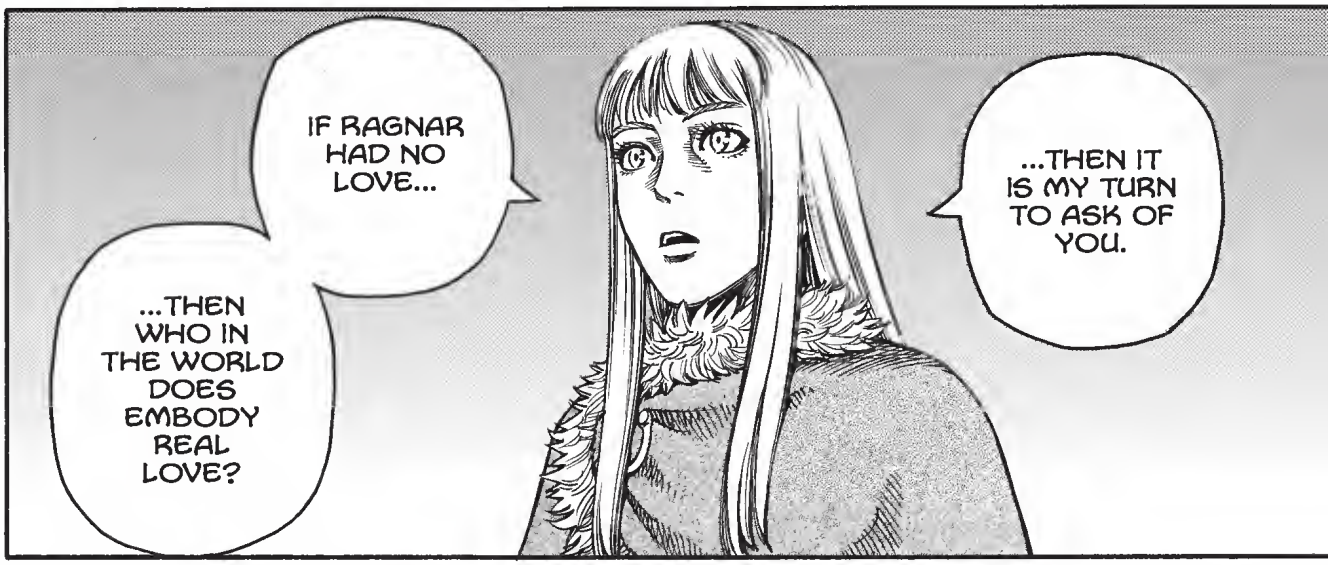
FWOO
KRA
TCH
HGAH!
SHONK
CRAK
CRAK
KRK
CRUNCH

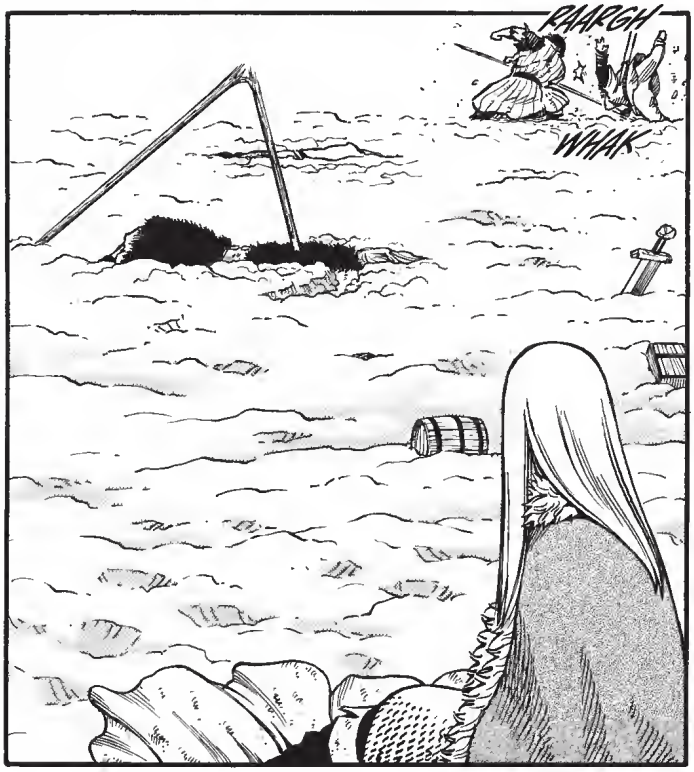

FUMP
THAT WAS INCRED-IBLE!!
OVER THERE !!
RAAAHHH
HA HA!
ONLY THE CAPTAIN COULD DO THAT!!
AMAZING!
WOO-HAH!! NOW HE HAS TO BE DEAD!!

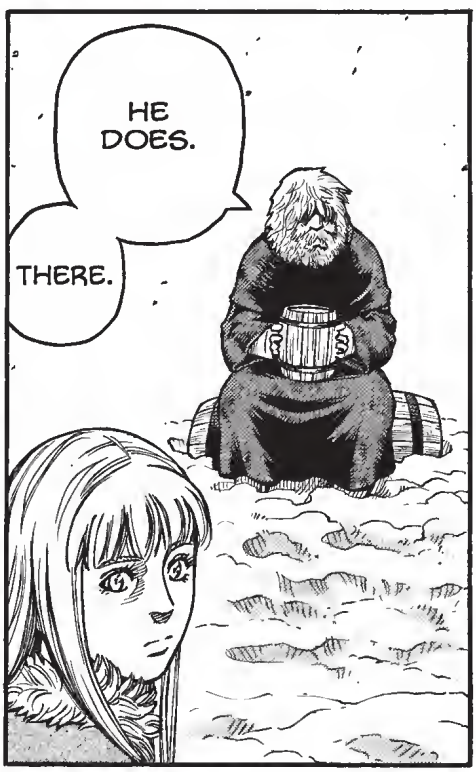
THERE GOES MY FINAL PAWN...
...SHIT...
NOW I'M REALLY OUT OF MOVES...

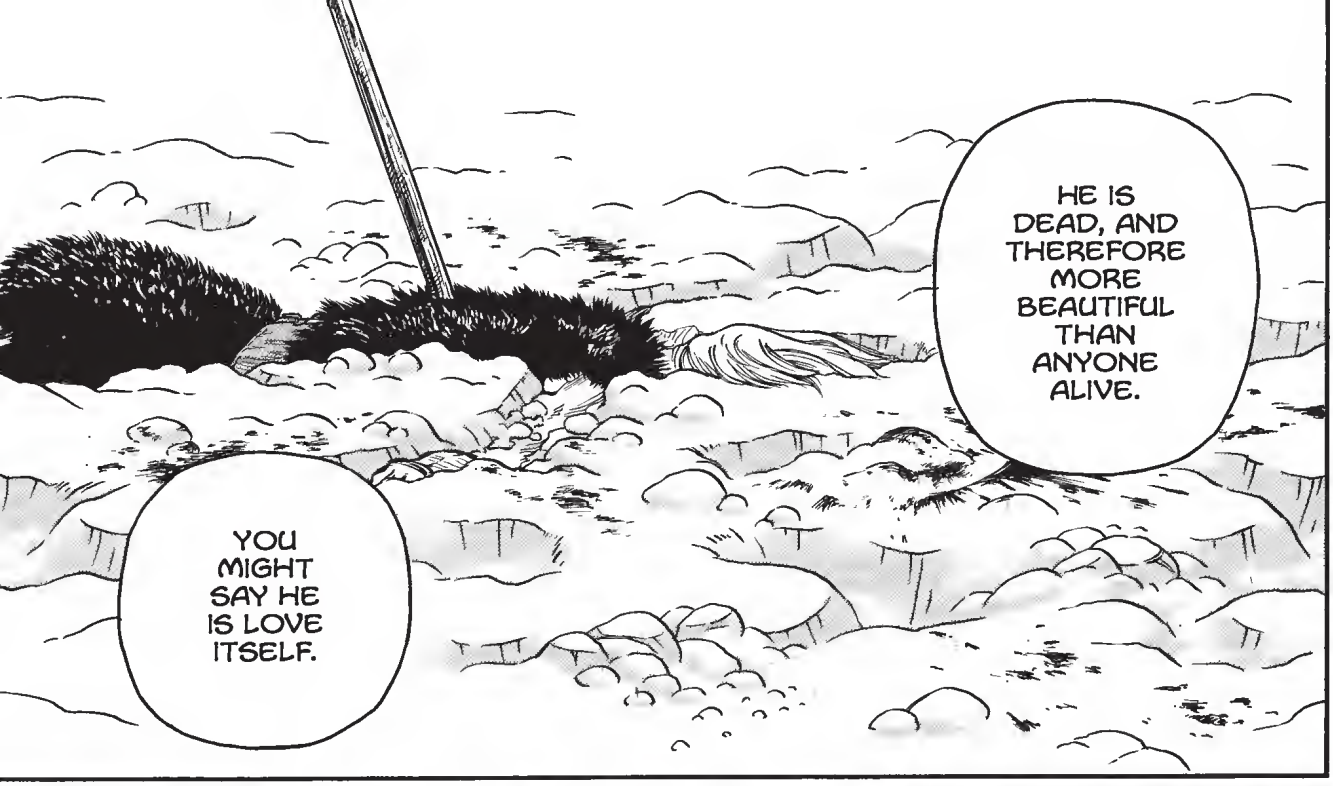
WHOOSH...
...WHAT IS LOVE, YOU ASK?
ARE YOU SAYING THAT RAGNAR DID NOT LOVE ME?

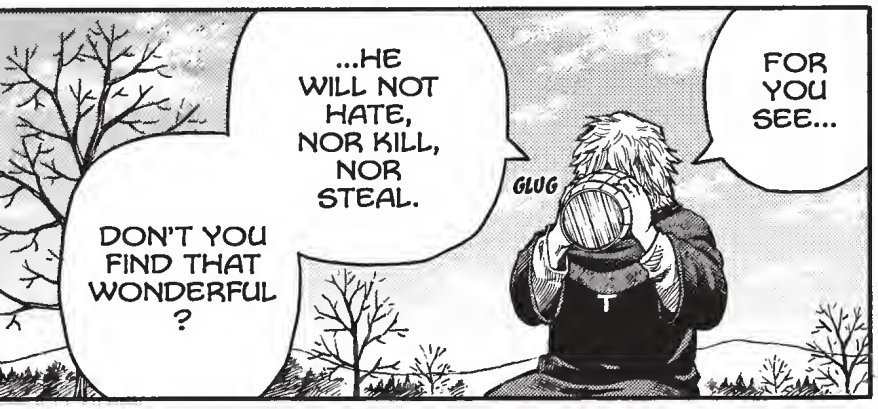

...YES...

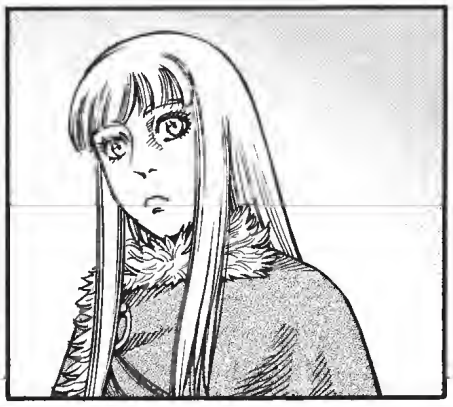

IF RAGNAR HAD NO LOVE...
...THEN WHO IN THE WORLD DOES EMBODY REAL LOVE?
...THEN IT IS MY TURN TO ASK OF YOU.


RAARGH
WHAK

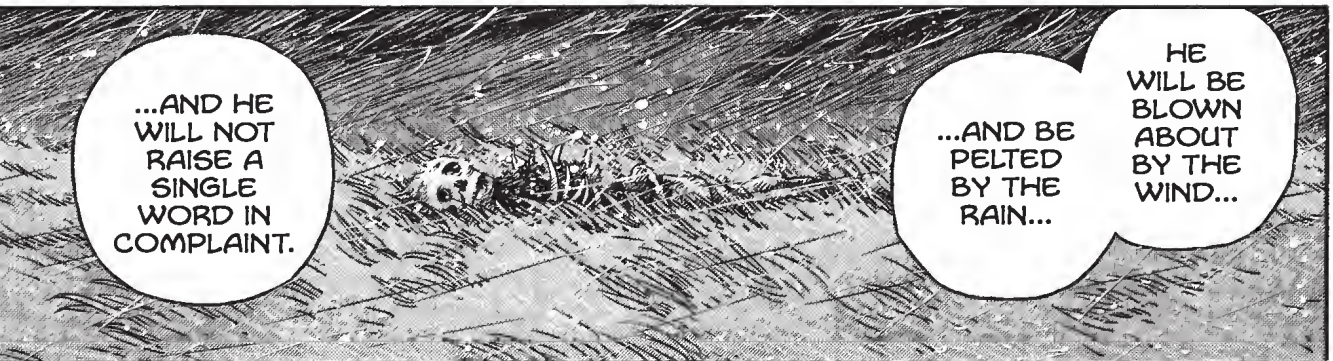

HE DOES.
THERE.


HE IS DEAD, AND THEREFORE MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN ANYONE ALIVE.
YOU MIGHT SAY HE IS LOVE ITSELF.


FOR YOU SEE...
GLUG
...HE WILL NOT HATE, NOR KILL, NOR STEAL.
DON'T YOU FIND THAT WONDERFUL ?

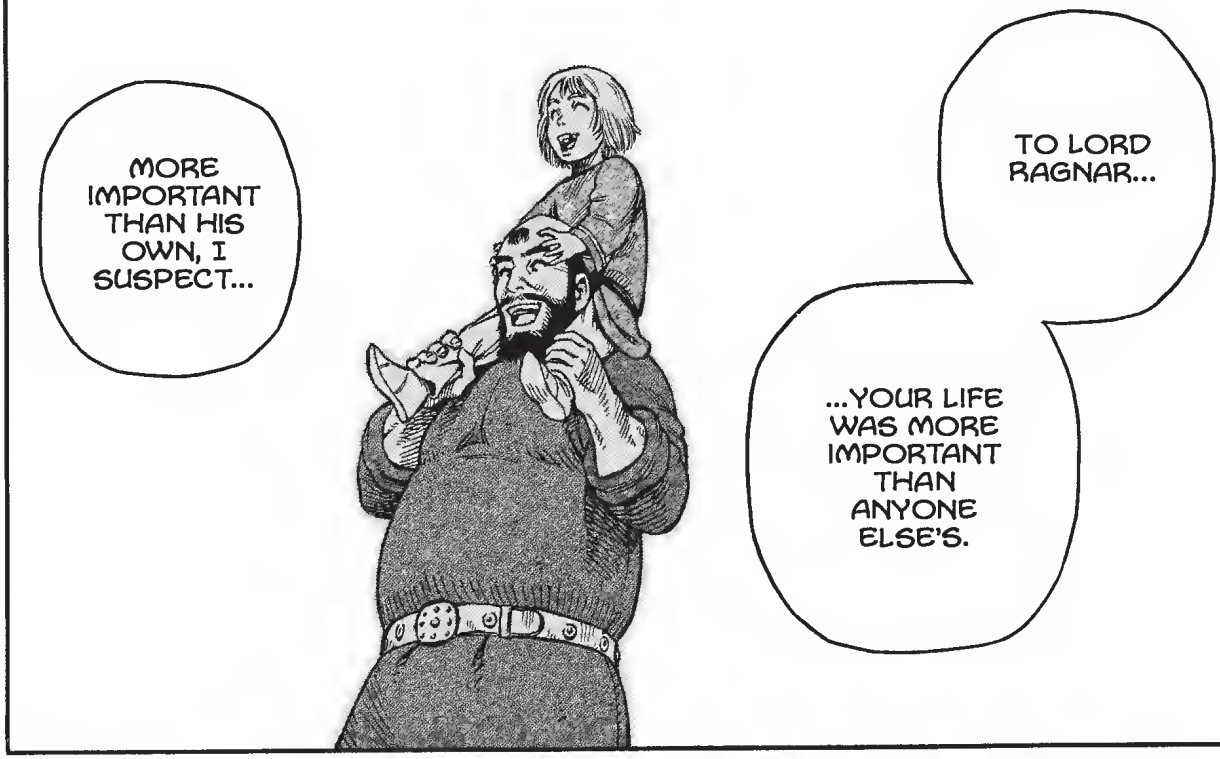


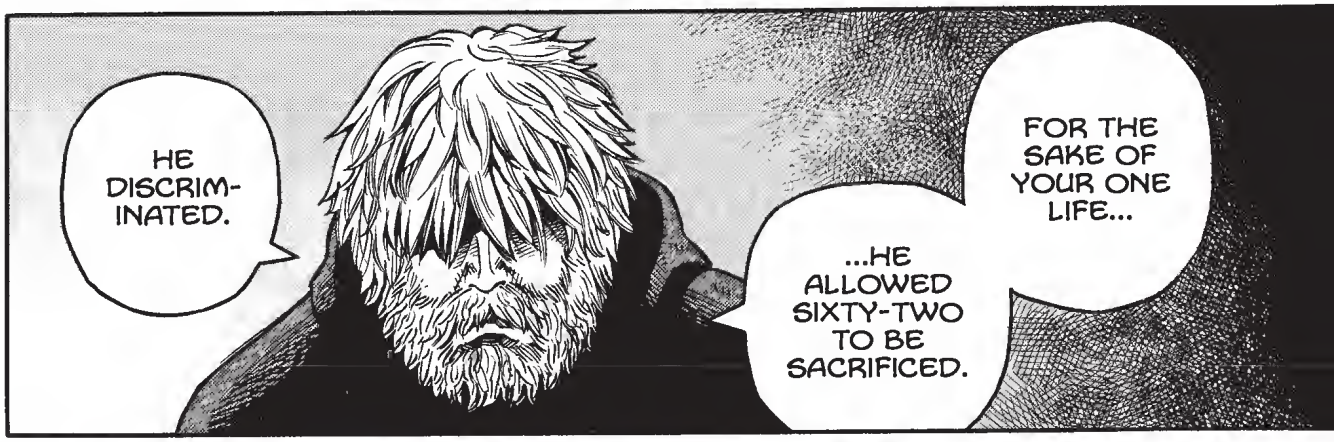
HIS BODY WILL BE ABANDONED HERE...
...AND HIS FLESH WILL FEED THE BEASTS AND INSECTS.

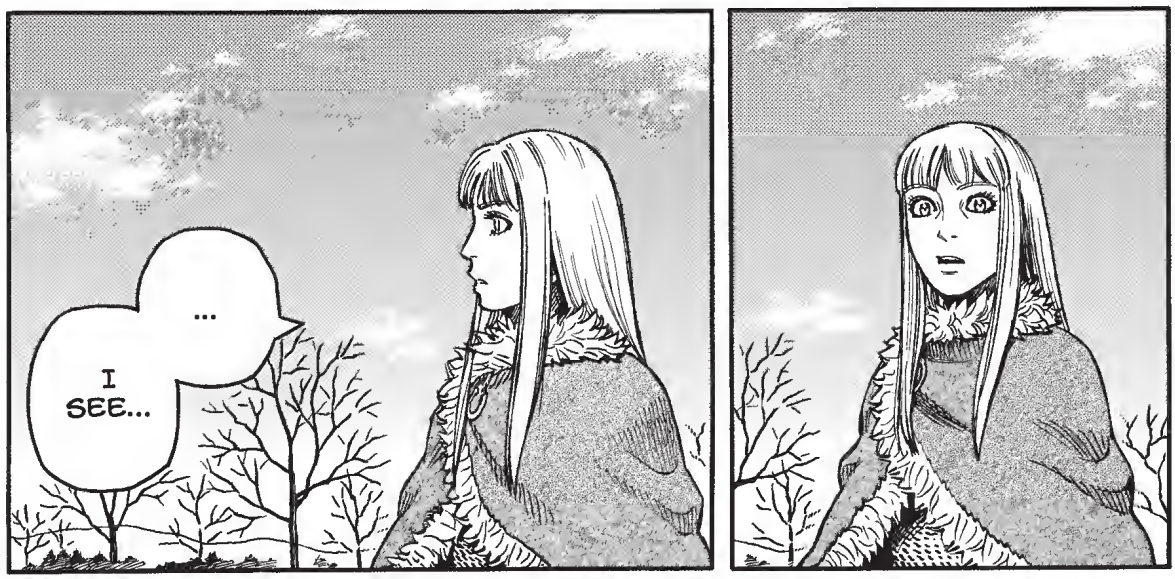

HE WILL BE BLOWN ABOUT BY THE WIND...
...AND BE PELTED BY THE RAIN...
...AND HE WILL NOT RAISE A SINGLE WORD IN COMPLAINT.

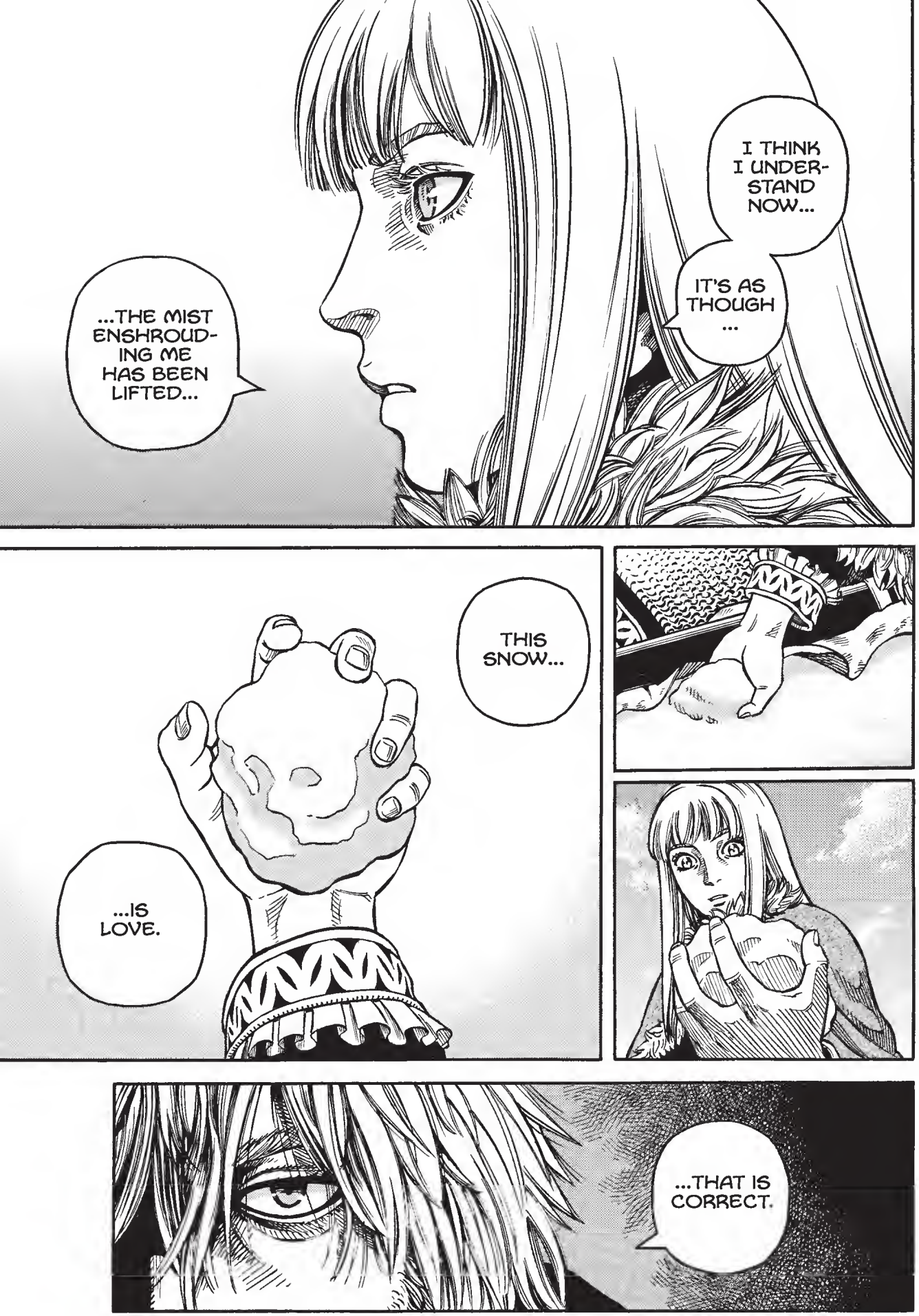
IT IS
DEATH THAT
COMPLETES
A MAN.

...IS DEATH?
YOU ARE SAYING... THAT THE ESSENCE OF LOVE...
YES.
WHAT IS THAT?
WHAT RAGNAR FELT FOR ME...
WHAT A HUSBAND AND WIFE FEEL FOR EACH OTHER...
THEN THE EMOTION A FATHER FEELS FOR HIS CHILD...
DISCRIMINATION.
IT IS HARDLY DIFFERENT FROM THE WAY ONE SWEARS FEALTY TO A KING, OR WHIPS A SLAVE.


MORE IMPORTANT THAN HIS OWN, I SUSPECT...
TO LORD RAGNAR...
...YOUR LIFE WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYONE ELSE'S.


HE DISCRIM-INATED.
FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR ONE LIFE...
...HE ALLOWED SIXTY-TWO TO BE SACRIFICED.

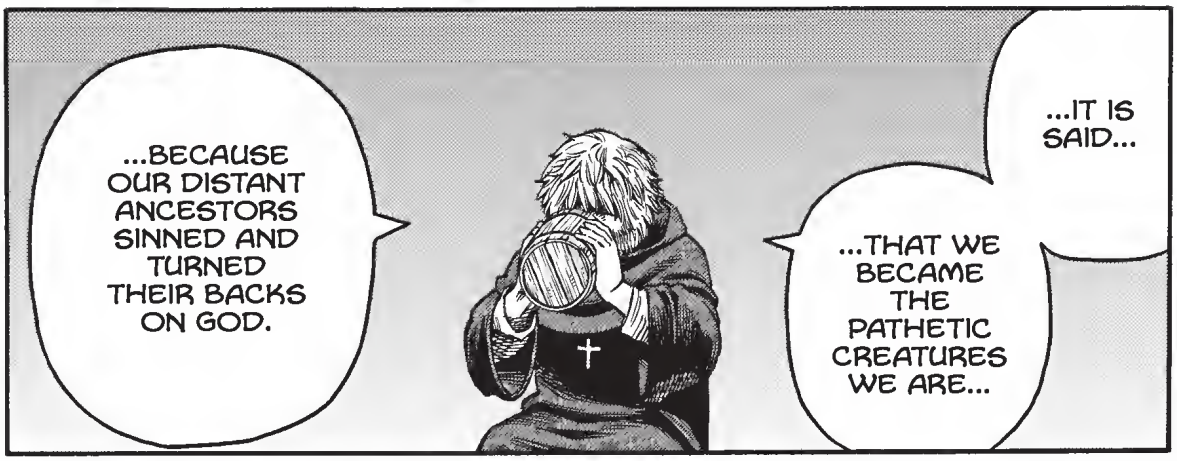

...
I SEE...

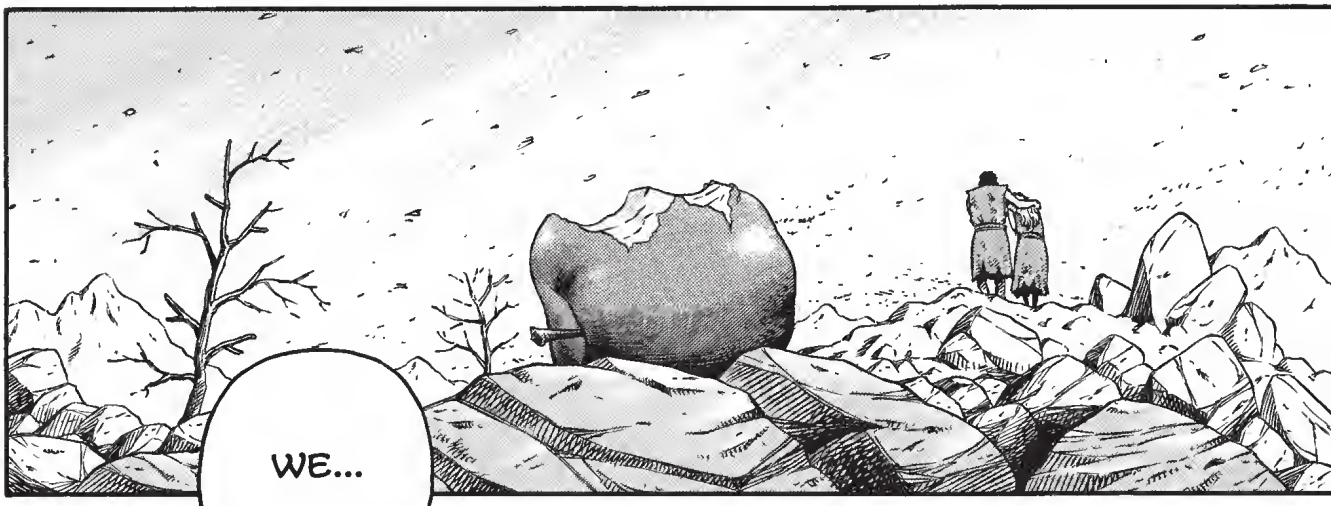

...THE MIST ENSHROUD-ING ME HAS BEEN LIFTED...
IT'S AS THOUGH ...
I THINK I UNDER-STAND NOW...
THIS SNOW...
...IS LOVE.
...THAT IS CORRECT.

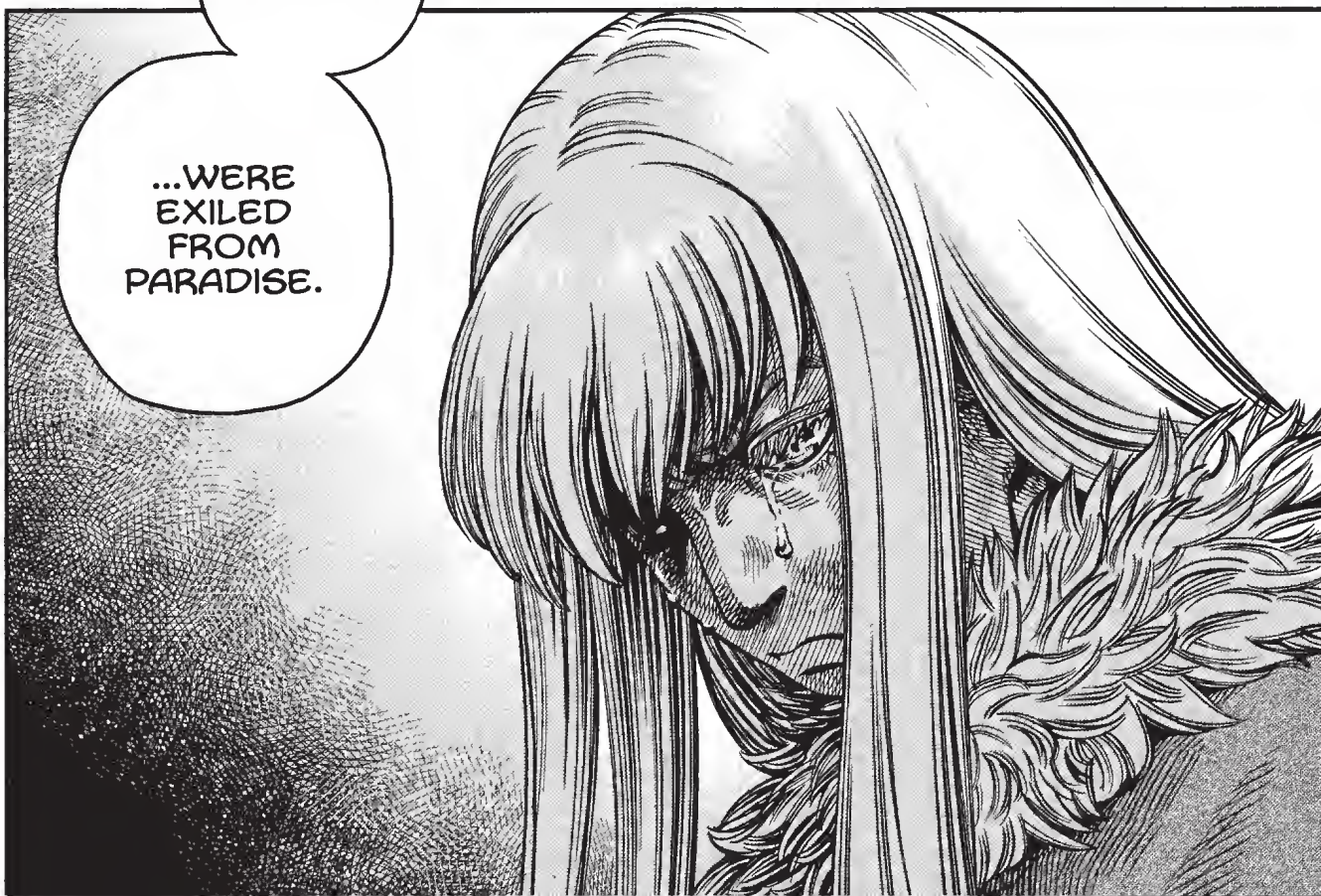
THE SUN.
THE SKY.
THE BREEZE THAT BLOWS.
THE MOUN-TAINS...
THE TREES.

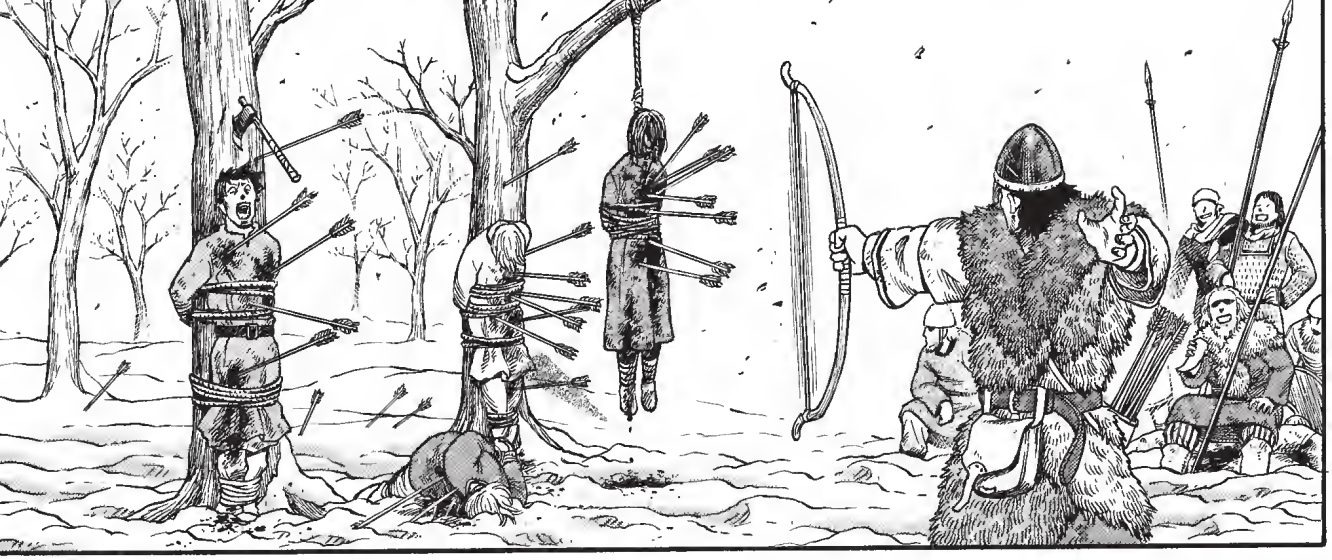
...AND YET...
HOW CAN THIS BE...?
THE WORLD...
GOD'S DIVINE CREATION... IS SO BRIMMING WITH LOVE...

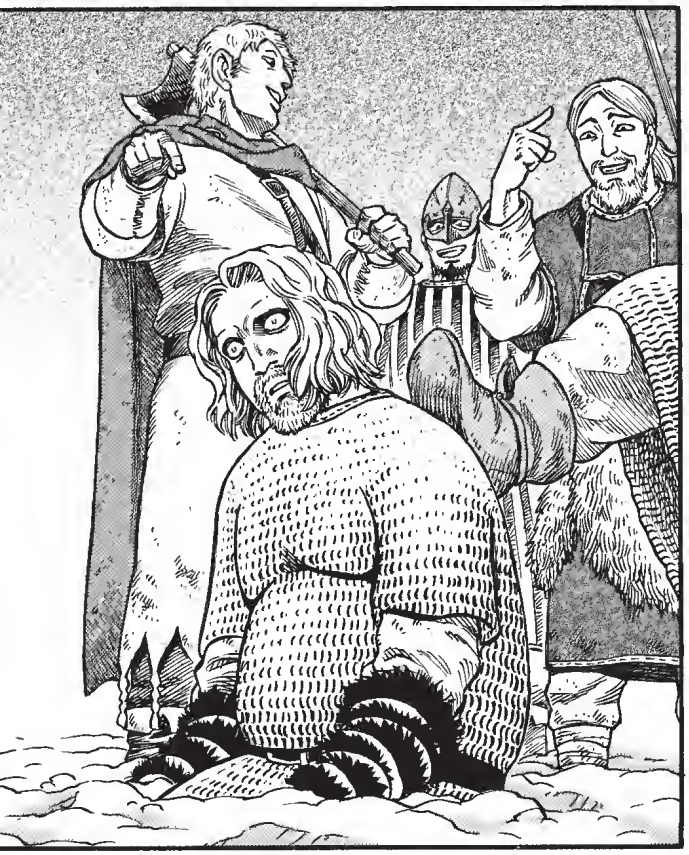
YET THERE IS NO LOVE...
...IN THE HEARTS OF MEN.

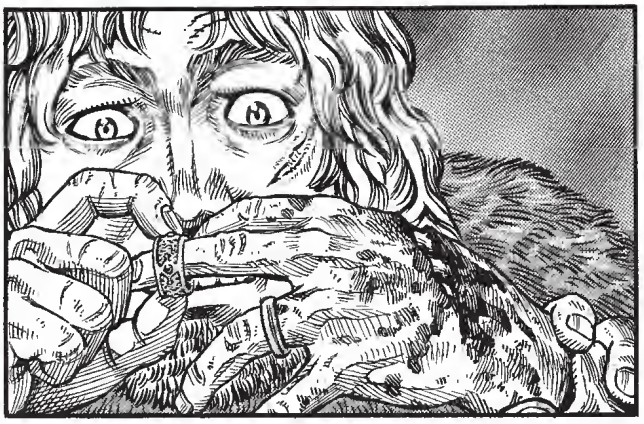

...IT IS SAID...
...THAT WE BECAME THE PATHETIC CREATURES WE ARE...
...BECAUSE OUR DISTANT ANCESTORS SINNED AND TURNED THEIR BACKS ON GOD.


WE...

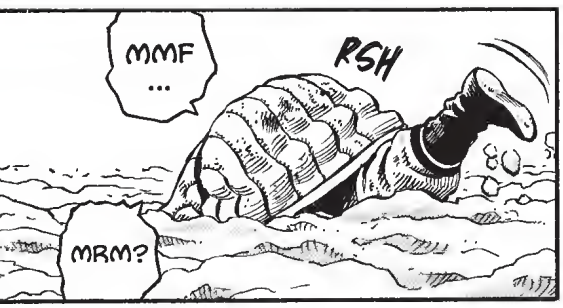

...WERE EXILED FROM PARADISE.

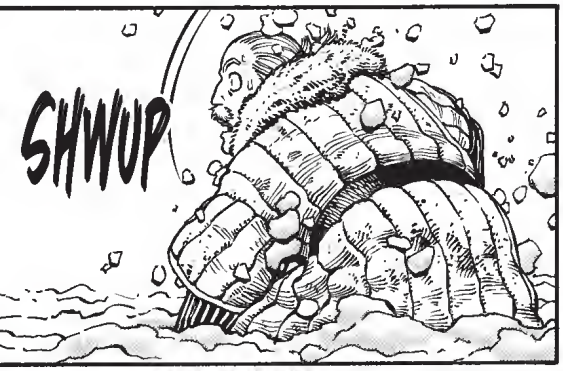


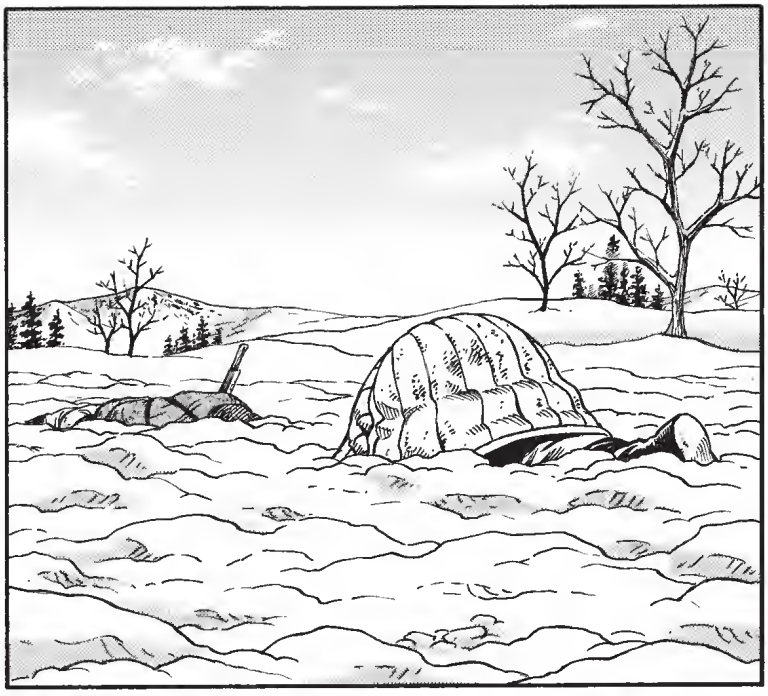




CHAPTER 37 - END


MMF
...
RSH
MRM?

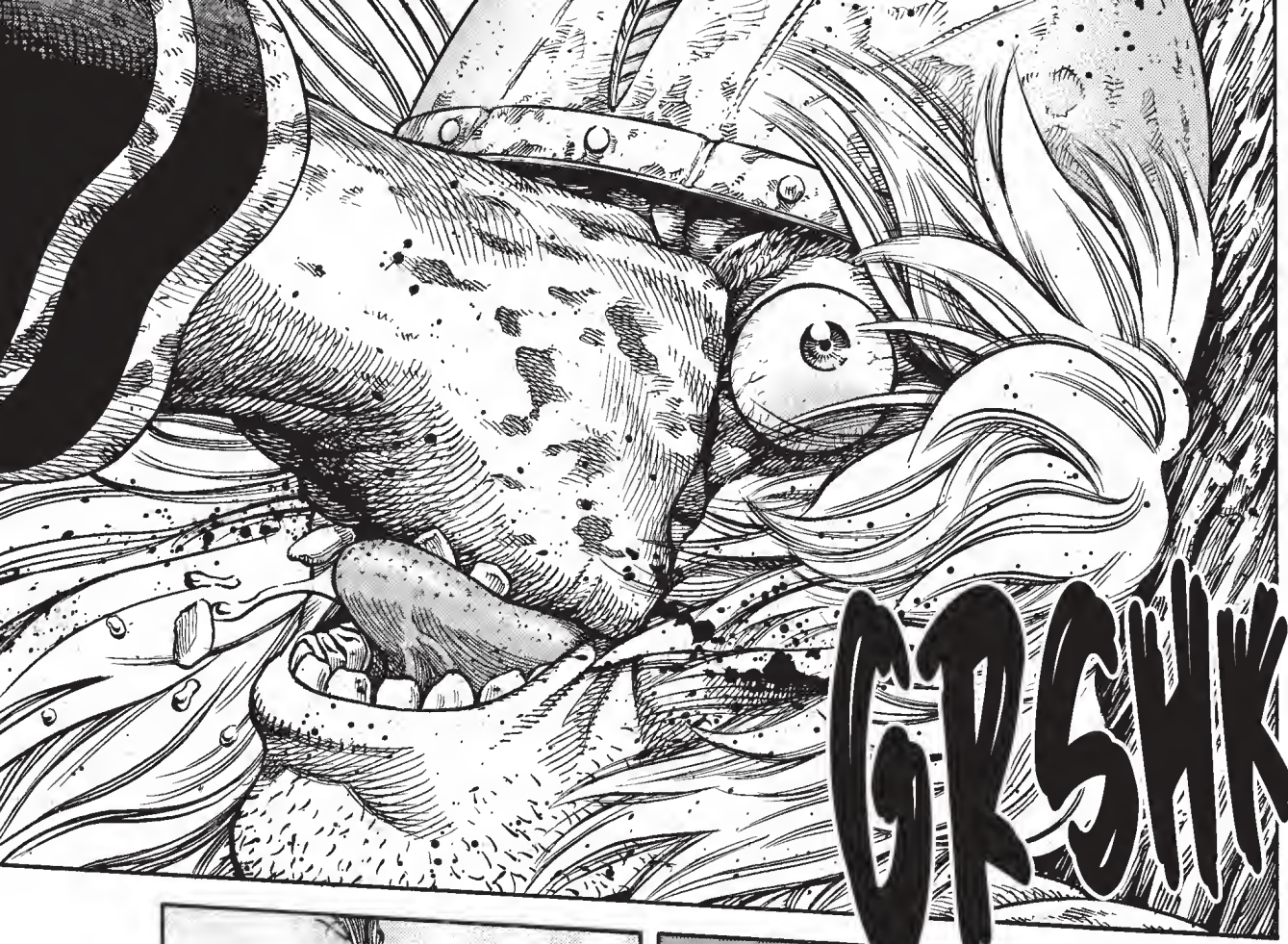

SHWUP



TWITCH
!!
HUH
?!

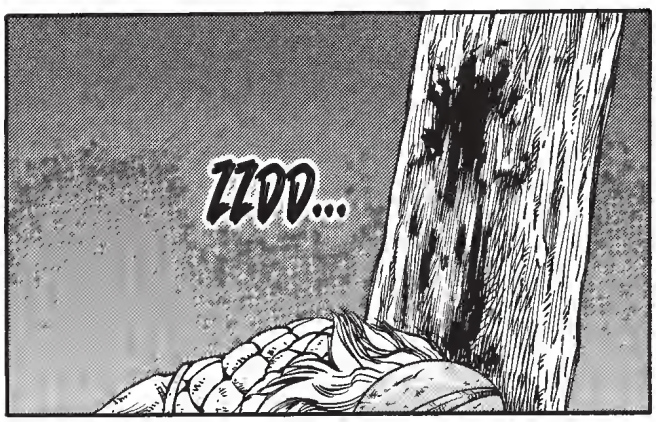
?
HUH
?!
?!

CHAPTER 38: OUT OF THE CRADLE


GRSHK

BRFF...
HFFFF...
THUD

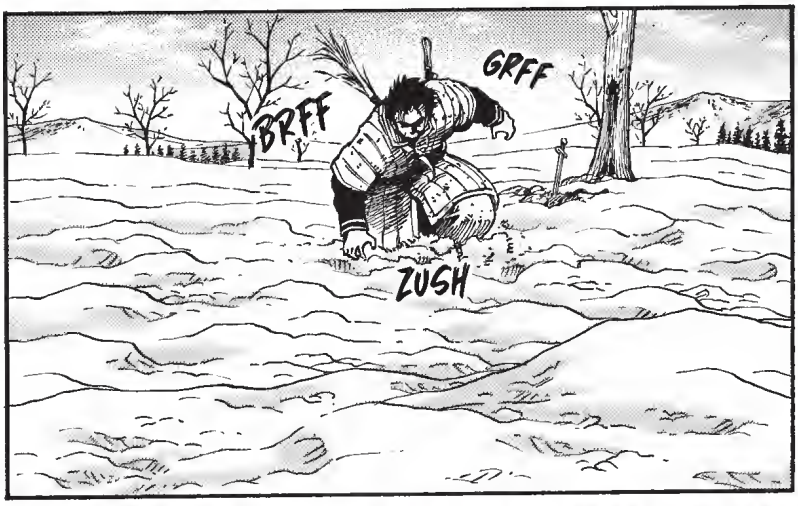
SHUK
HFUH...


ZZDD...

GRFFH...

GRRRG
FFH
BRFF
FFH
GRUAHHH

RAAAGH
IT SEEMS THE CONTEST IS OVER.

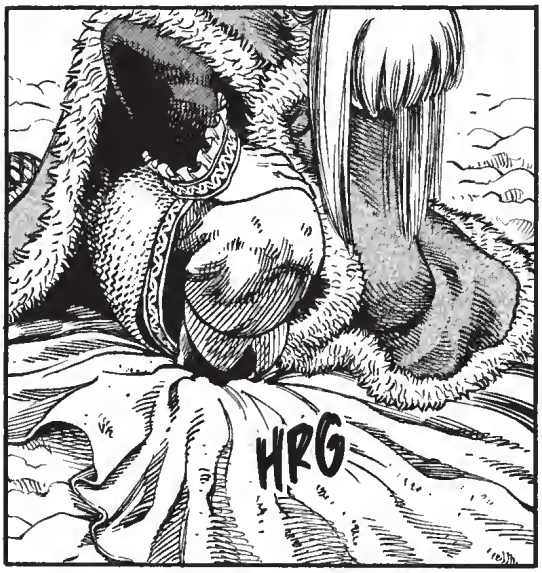

GRFF
BRFF
ZUSH

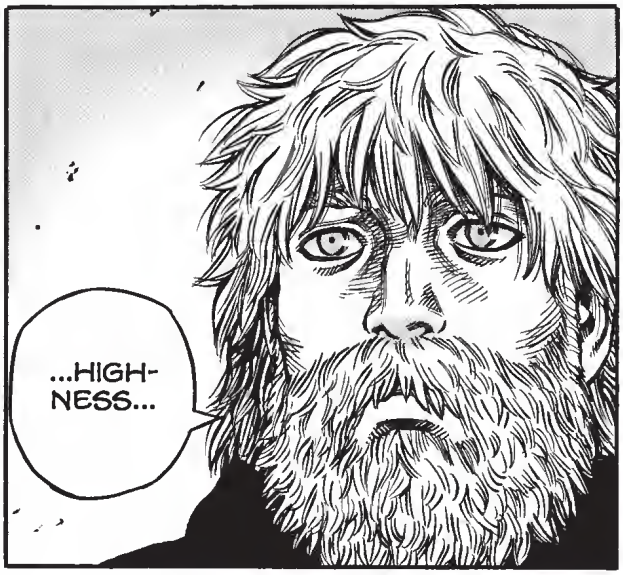
BUT...

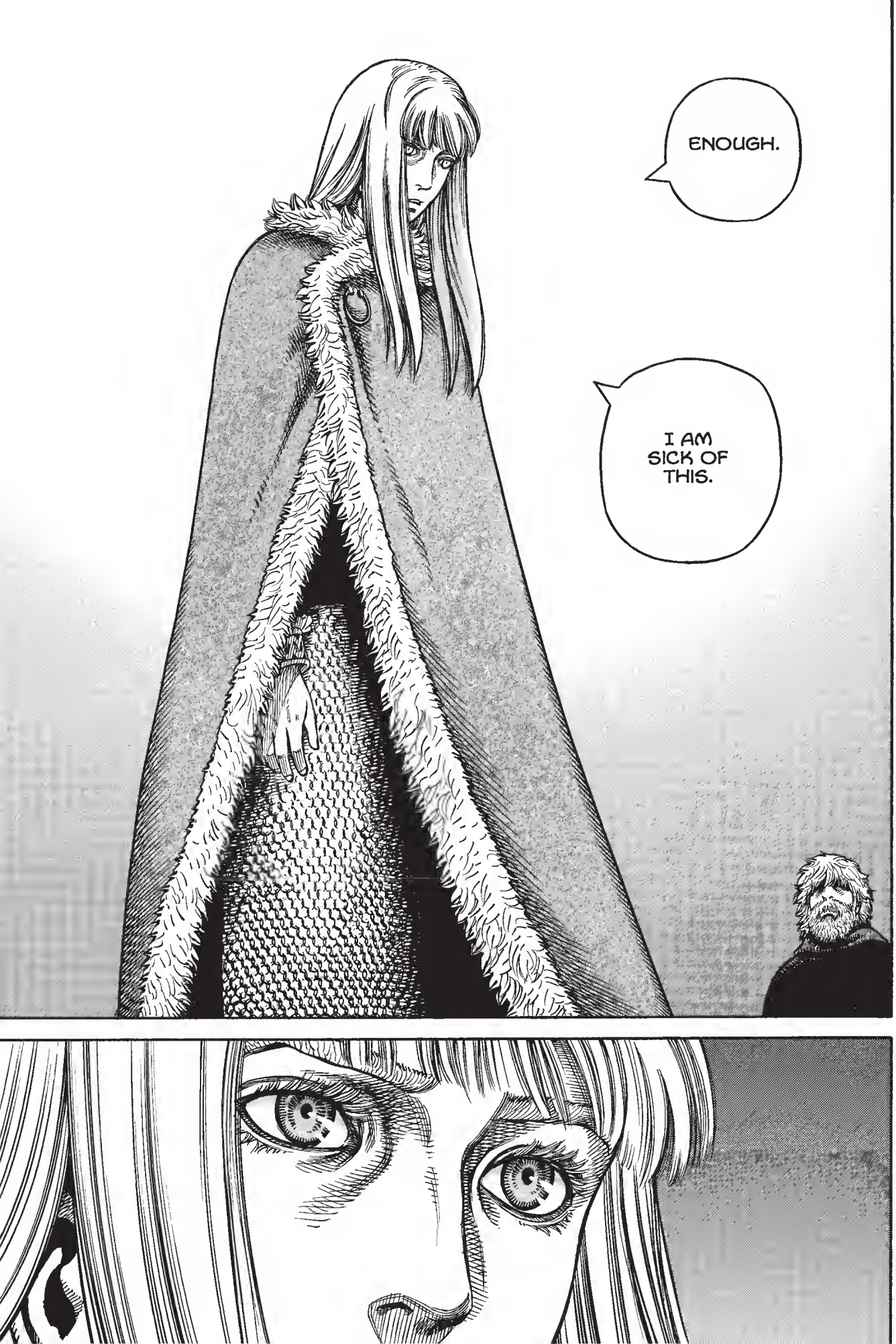
I'M AFRAID THE WINNER...
...HAS LOST HIS SANITY.

...SANITY?
YOU MIGHT WANT TO FLEE, YOUR HIGH-NESS.
GRAA
AGH
WHERE IN THIS WORLD CAN A SANE MAN BE FOUND?
NONE OF US UNDER-STANDS WHAT IT MEANS TO LOVE ALL.
WE'RE ALL THE SAME.
WE'RE THE SAME.

OR THE MEANING OF LIFE...
OR THE MEANING OF DEATH...
OR THE MEANING OF THEIR OWN BATTLES.


HRG

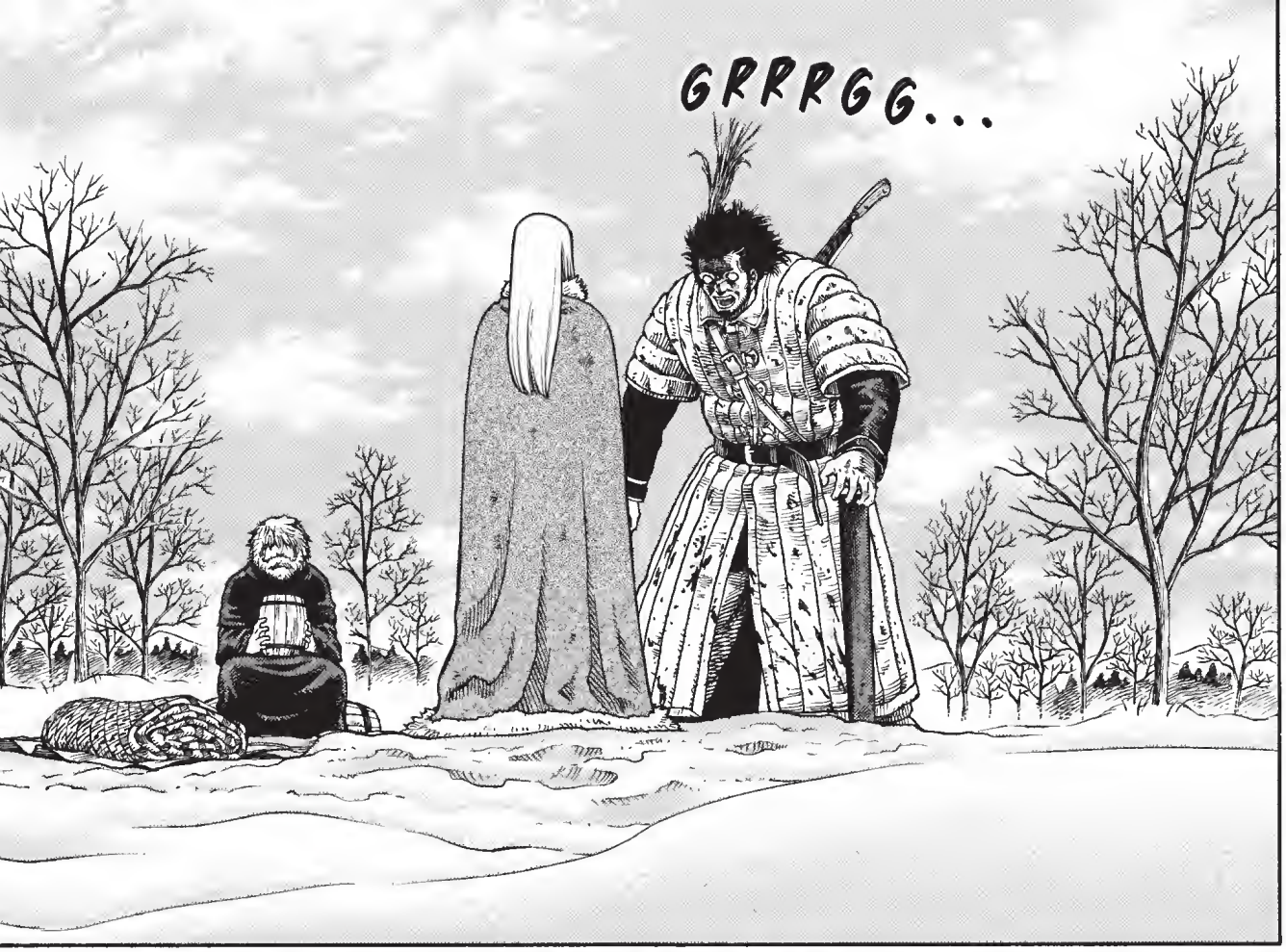

...HIGH-NESS...


ENOUGH.
I AM SICK OF THIS.

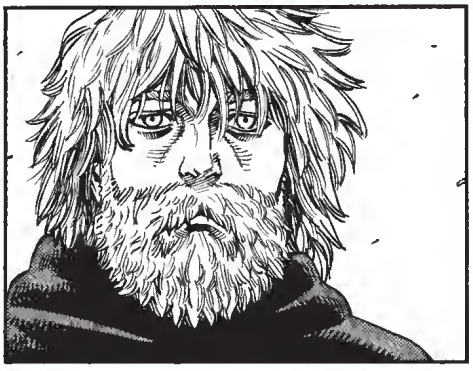
CHAPTER 38 - END

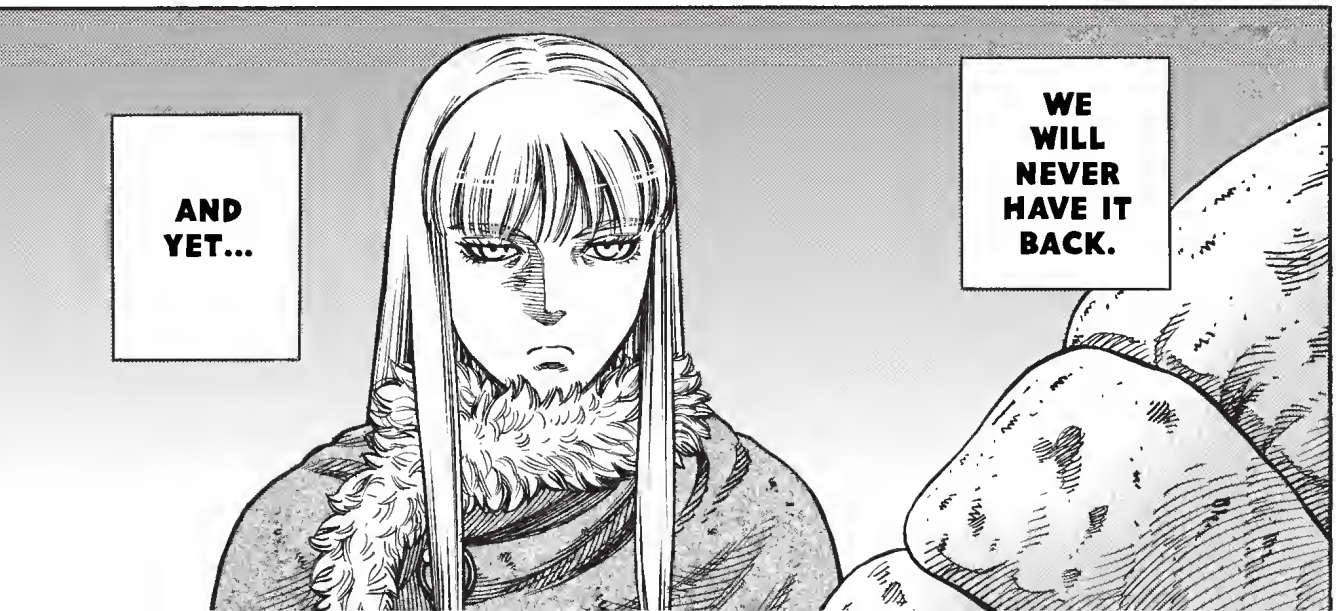
CHAPTER 39: THE KING AWAKENS

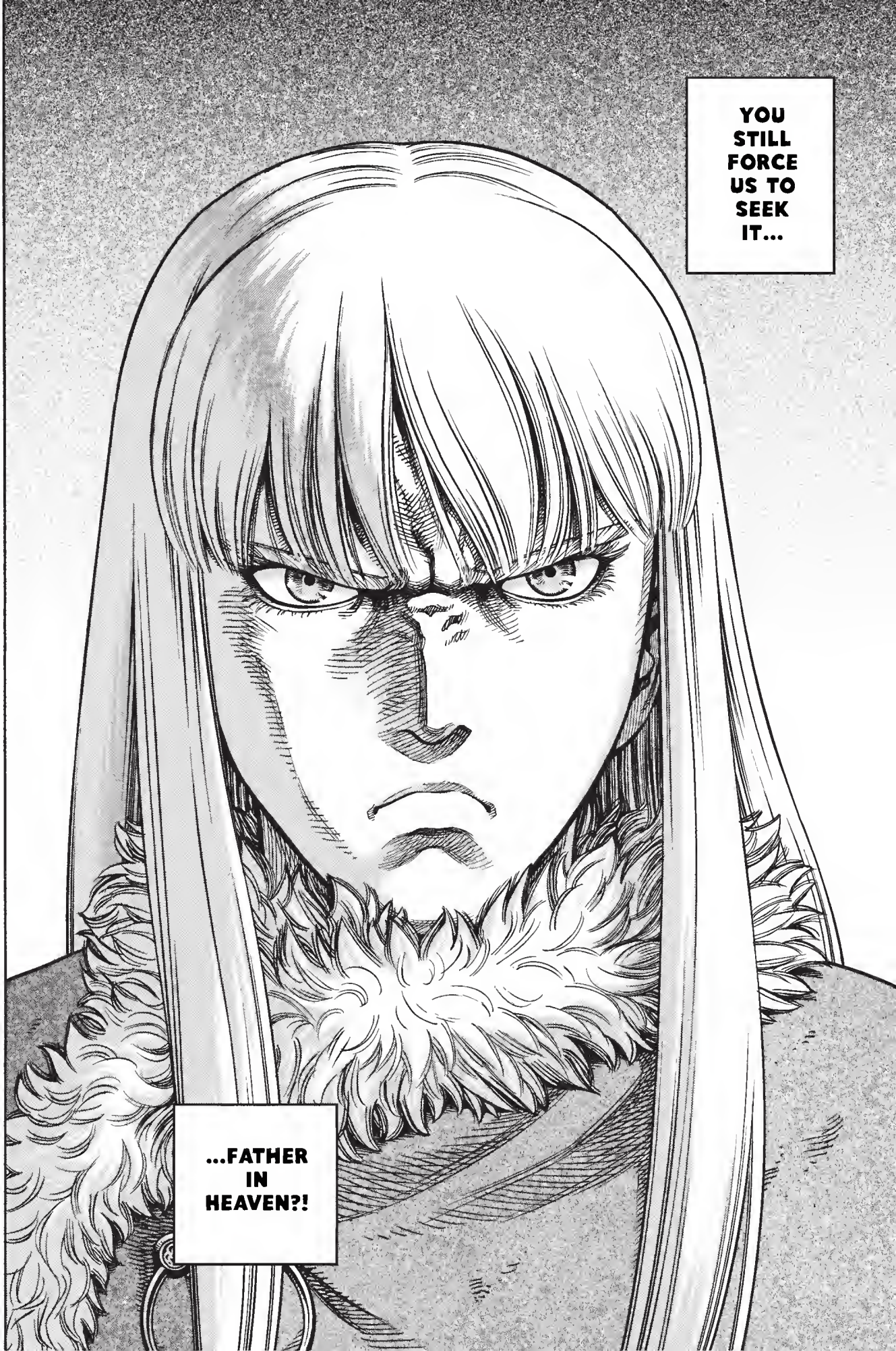
WE GAINED KNOW-LEDGE...
...BUT LOST SOME-THING IN RETURN.
SOME-THING...
THE MOST PRECIOUS THING OF ALL.
...THAT WE WILL NEVER REGAIN AS LONG AS WE LIVE.


GRRRGG...

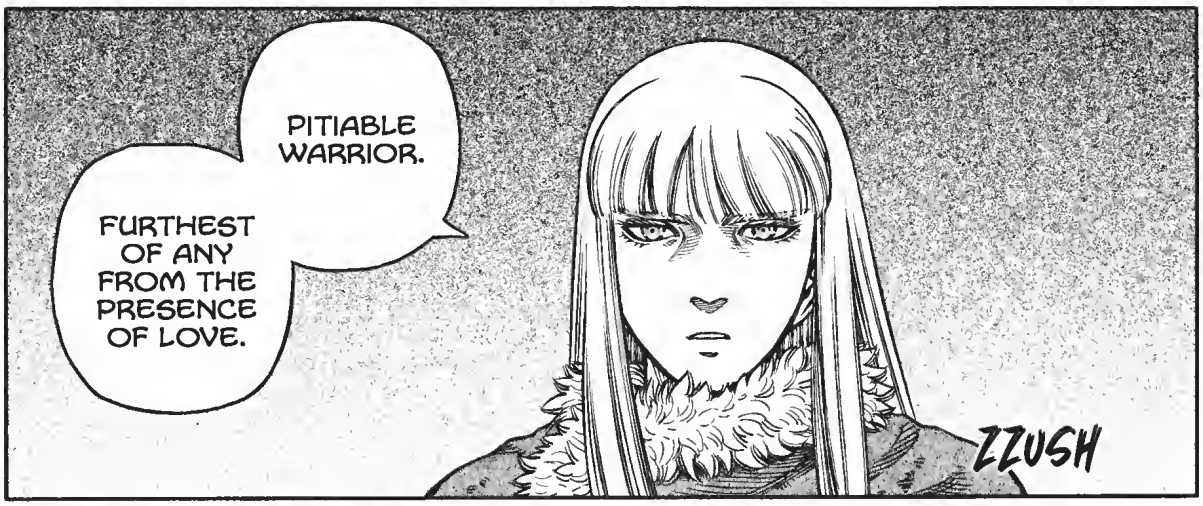
...

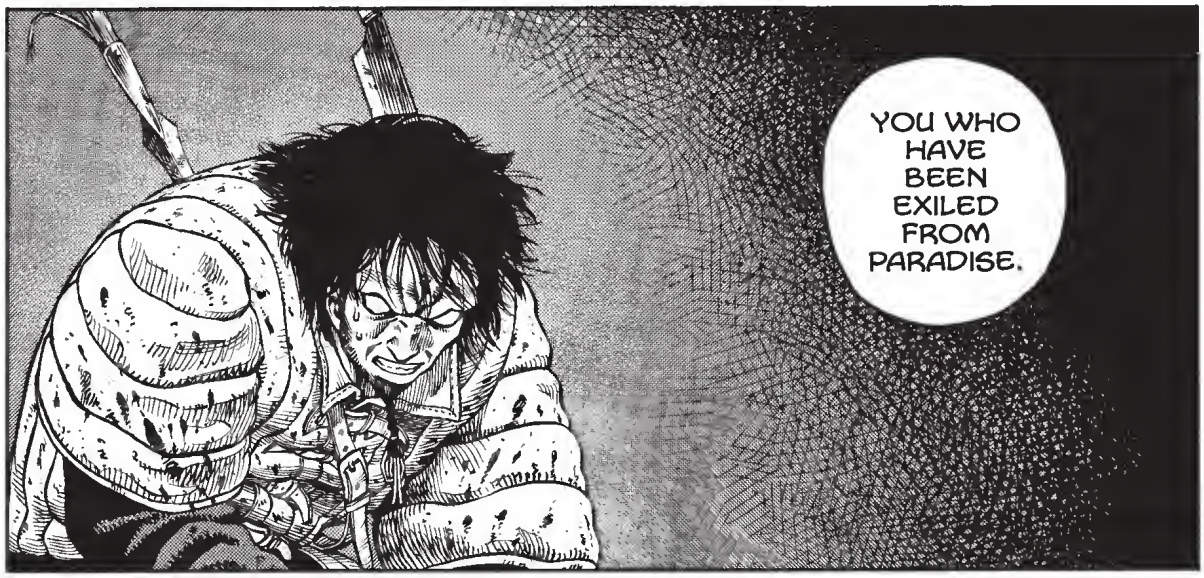


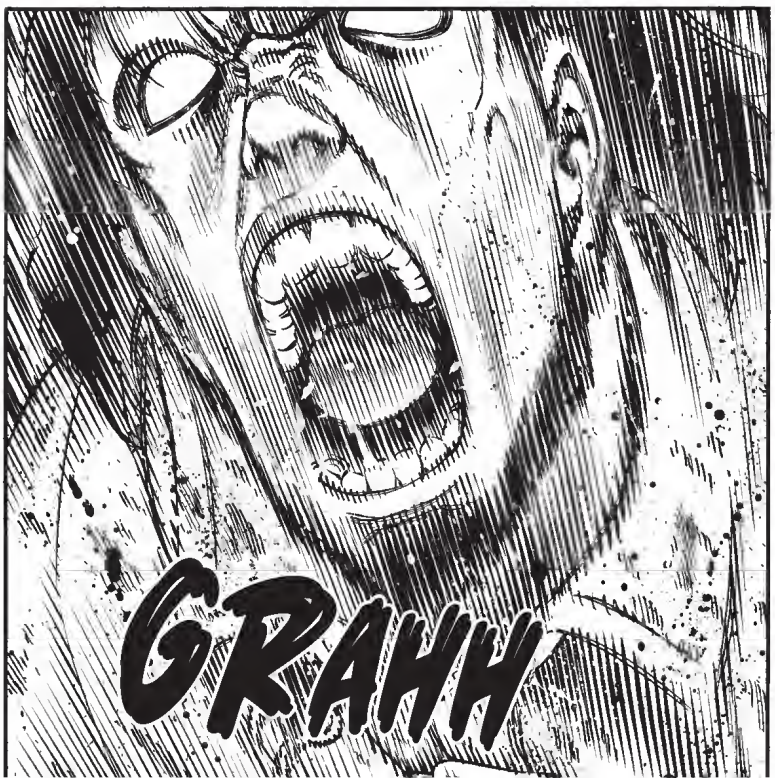

AND YET...
WE WILL NEVER HAVE IT BACK.


YOU STILL FORCE US TO SEEK IT...
...FATHER IN HEAVEN?!

TWITCH
ZSH
BAM
ZSH
ZSH

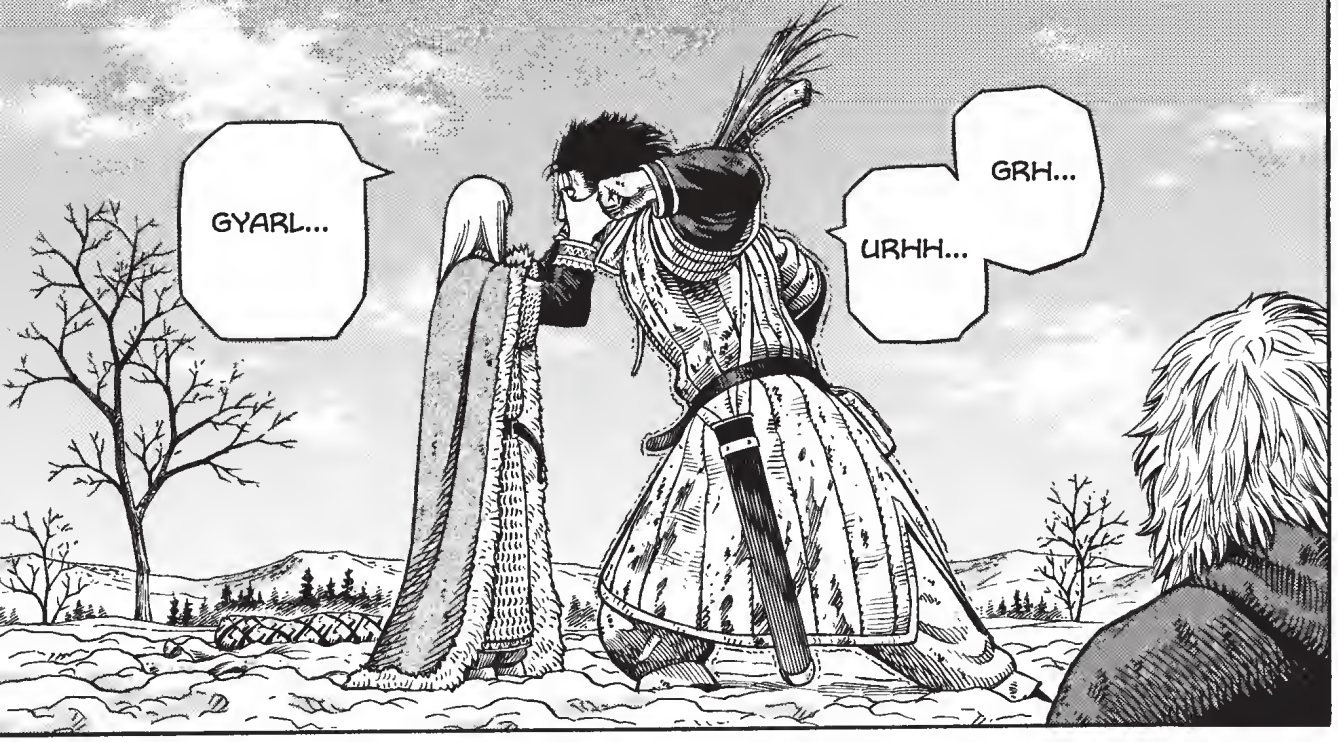

PITIABLE WARRIOR.
FURTHEST OF ANY FROM THE PRESENCE OF LOVE.
ZZUSH

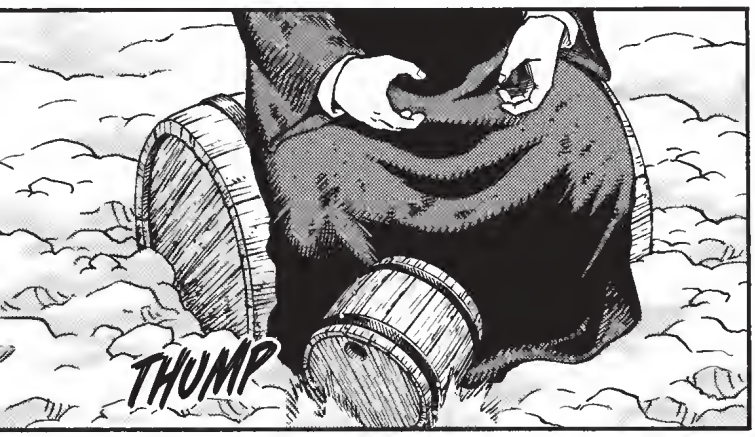

YOU WHO HAVE BEEN EXILED FROM PARADISE.

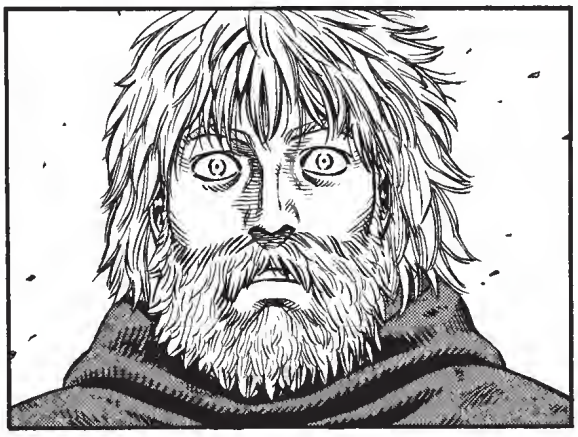

GRAHH

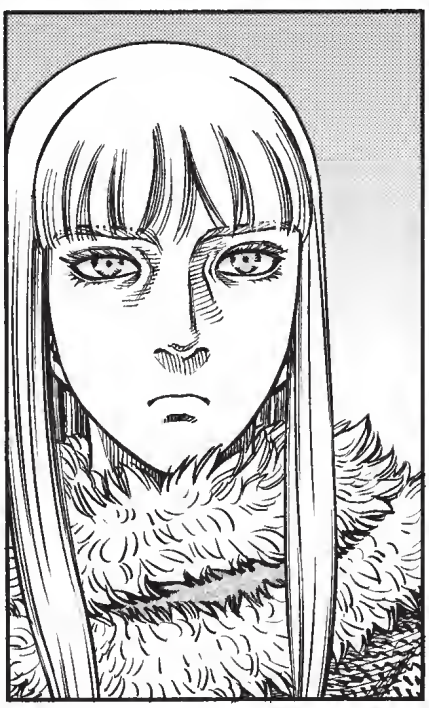
GRRLL

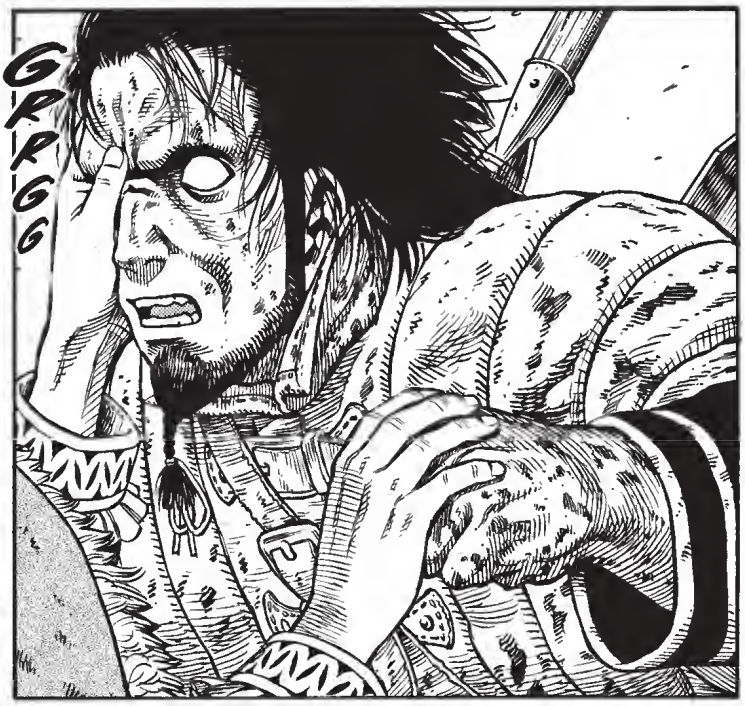
RAAA
GH
IS THERE NO WAY TO END THE PAIN THAT IS YOUR PUNISH-MENT...
...OTHER THAN THE FINALITY OF DEATH?!
DOES OUR LIFE EXIST ONLY FOR US TO UNDERGO THE BURDEN OF YOUR TESTS...
...FATHER IN HEAVEN?!
THIS MAN'S SOUL CANNOT BE SAVED WITH YOUR TRIALS!!

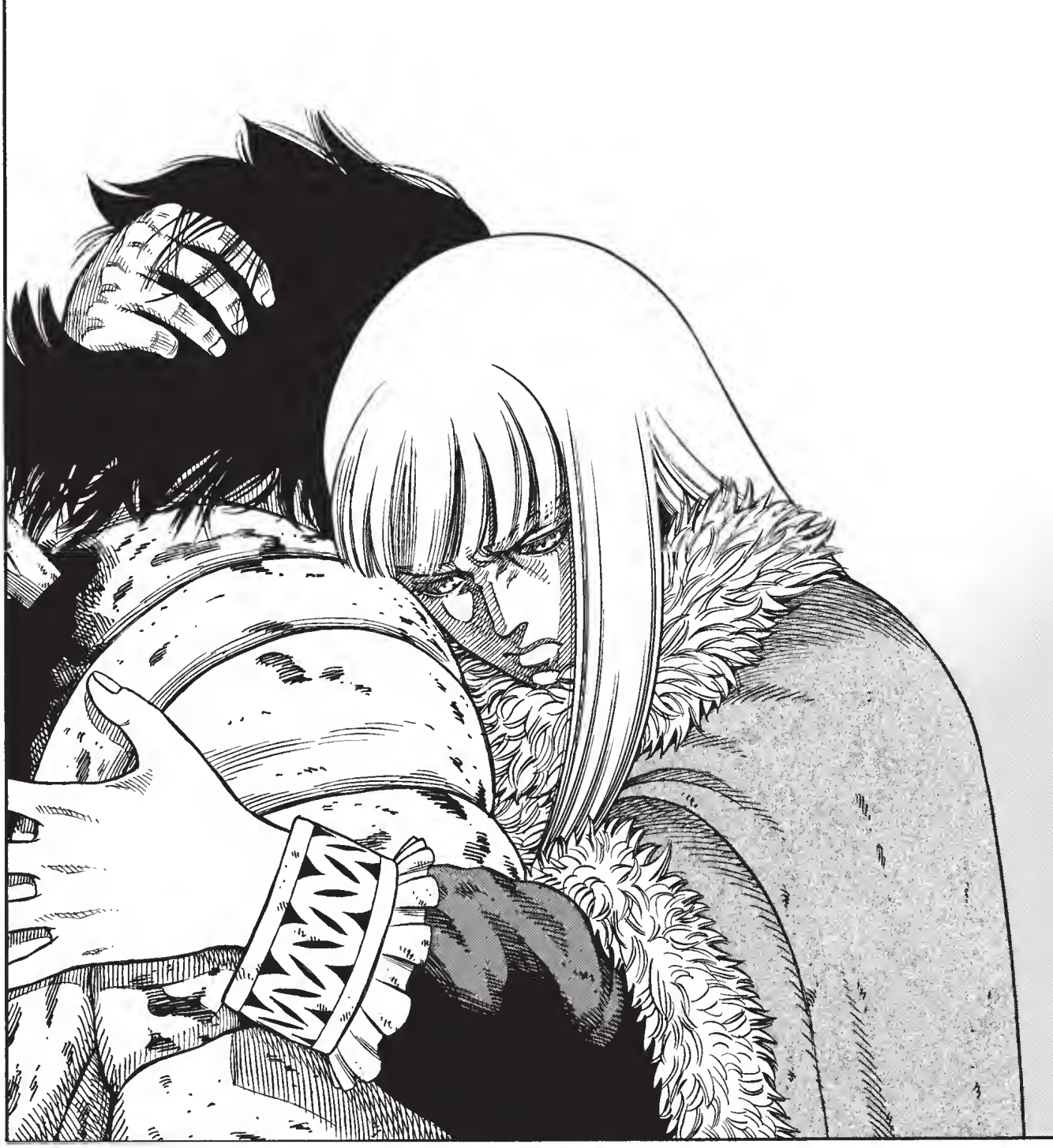

GYARL...
GRH...
URHH...

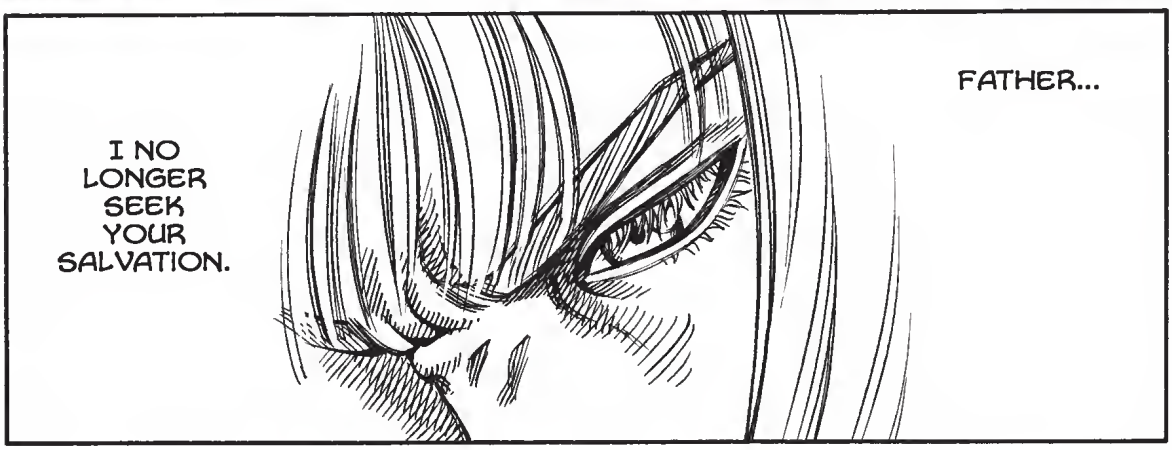

THUMP





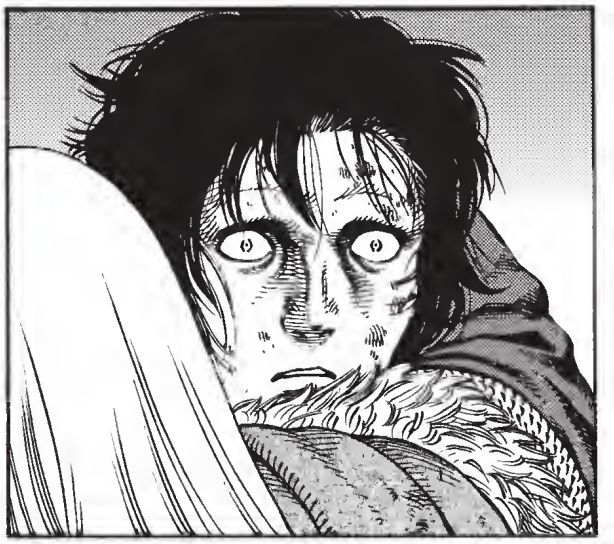

GRRGG

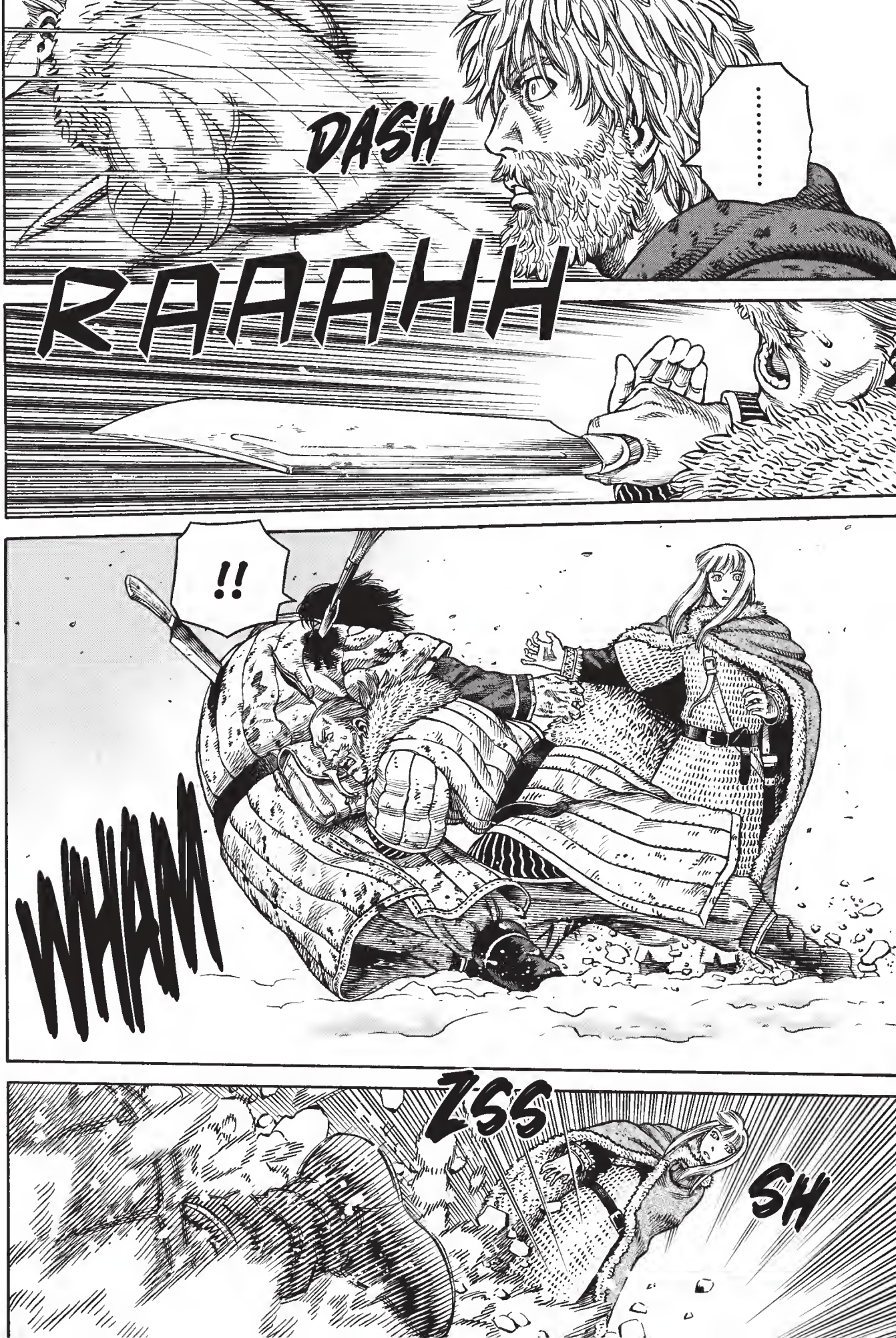



FATHER...
I NO LONGER SEEK YOUR SALVATION.

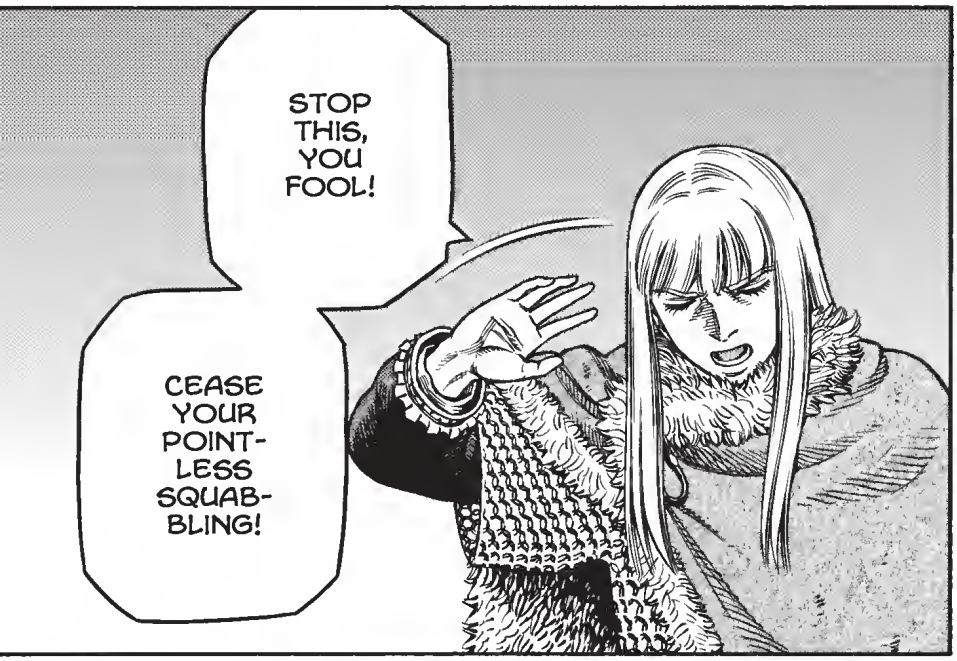
IF YOU WILL NOT GIVE IT TO US...
...THEN WE HAVE NO CHOICE...
...BUT TO RECREATE PARADISE WITH OUR OWN HANDS!

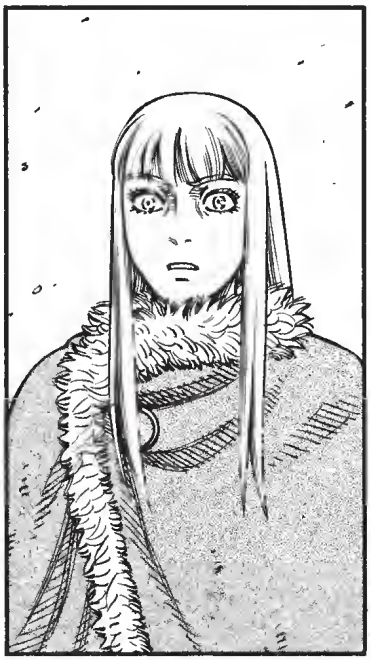
HUH...?
THE PRINCE?

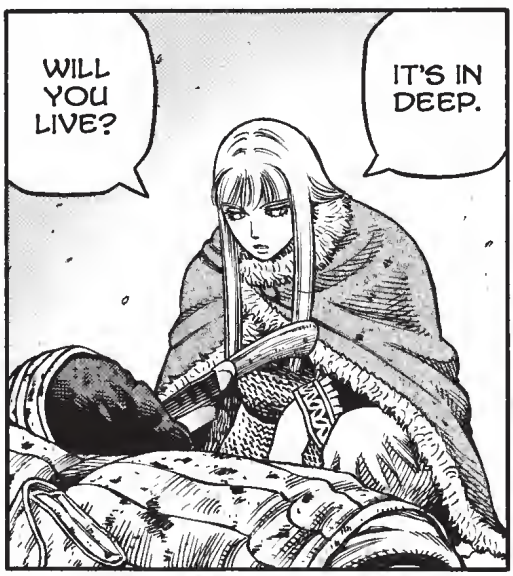


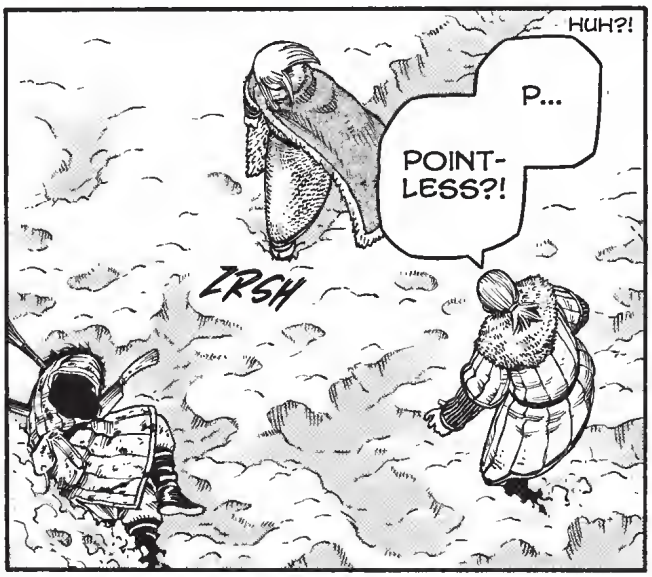

DASH
RAAAHH
.....
!!
WHAM
ZSS
SH

ARE YOU WELL, HIGH-NESS ?!
YEARR
RGH


STOP THIS, YOU FOOL!
CEASE YOUR POINT-LESS SQUAB-BLING!




WILL YOU LIVE?
IT'S IN DEEP.


HUH?!
P...
POINT-LESS?!
IRGH

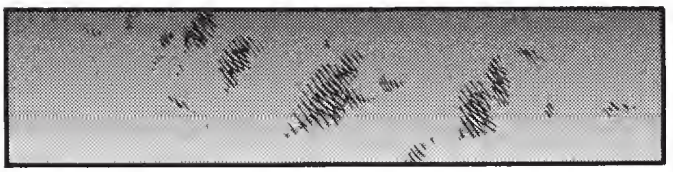
WILLI-BALD!!
DON'T MOVE. HE GOT YOU IN THE GUTS.
DAMN... WHAT A CARELESS LAPSE.
THE MIGHTY BJORN IS SUPPOSED TO BE BETTER THAN THIS...
YOU, HELP.
I WILL ROUND UP THE SCATTERED HORSES.
SEE TO THIS MAN.
SHUT YOUR MOUTH AND HELP.
...I HAVE WIT-NESSED A MIRACLE.
YOUR HIGH-NESS...

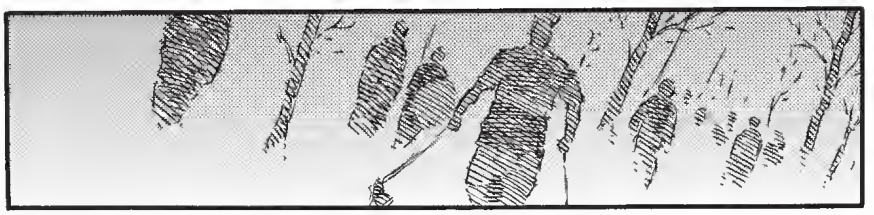
YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE! I'M HANDING YOU OVER TO THORKELL!
GRAB
IF I DON'T, HE'LL SLAUGHTER MY–
HEY! WAIT... PRINCE!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING WITH THE HORSES?!
ZSH
WE MUST ASK FOR USE OF THEIR SLED TO MOVE THIS WOUNDED MAN.
GOING TO THORKELL IS EXACTLY MY PLAN.
DON'T YOU DARE FUCKING HUMILIATE ME!!
WHA–?!
YOU CAN'T!!

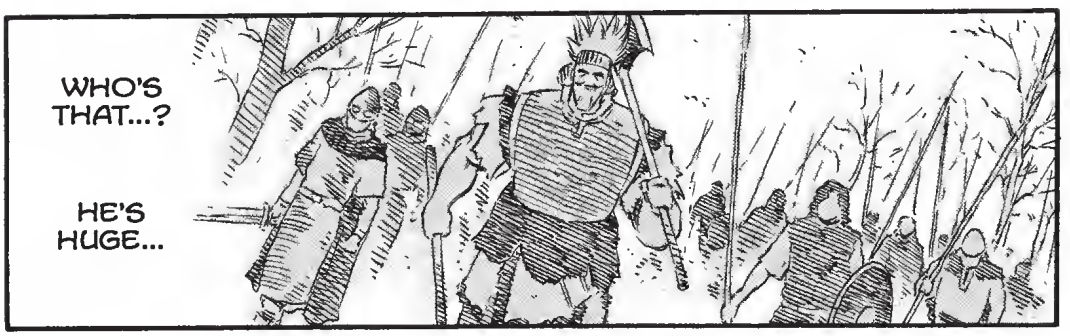
DON'T YOU UNDER-STAND WHY I'VE GONE TO SUCH LENGTHS, YOU LITTLE SHIT?!
DTHUD
IF THORKELL GETS HIS HANDS ON YOU AFTER ALL, THEN ALL OF THIS MEANT NOTHING!!
...MEANT NO-THING?
"MEANT"?
WHAT YOUR BATTLE MEANT?
THERE IS NO MEANING TO THIS BATTLE.
SO STOP DYING.

BE MY SUBJECTS, WARRIORS...
...AND I WILL SHOW YOU THE PROPER TIME AND ENEMY FOR YOUR BATTLES.
I WILL GIVE YOUR STRUGGLES...
...YOUR LIVES AND DEATHS...
...A PROPER MEANING.

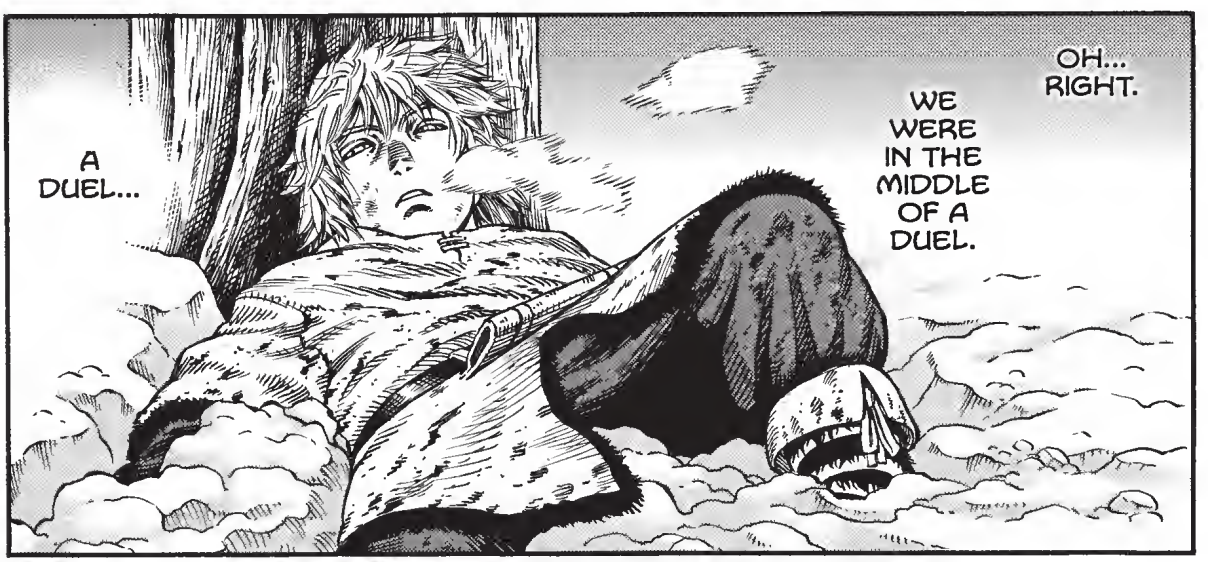
THAT IS THE CALLING OF A KING.

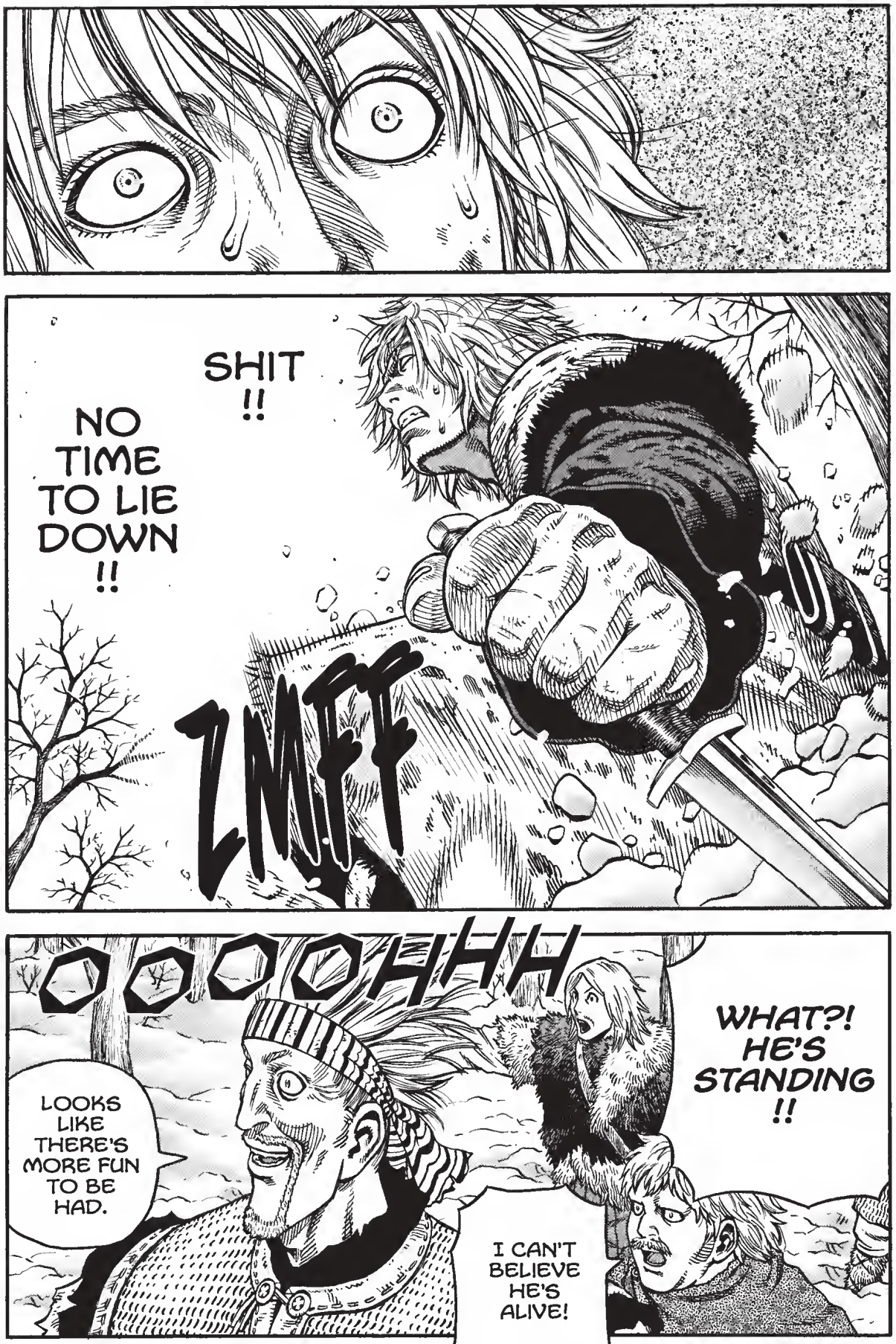


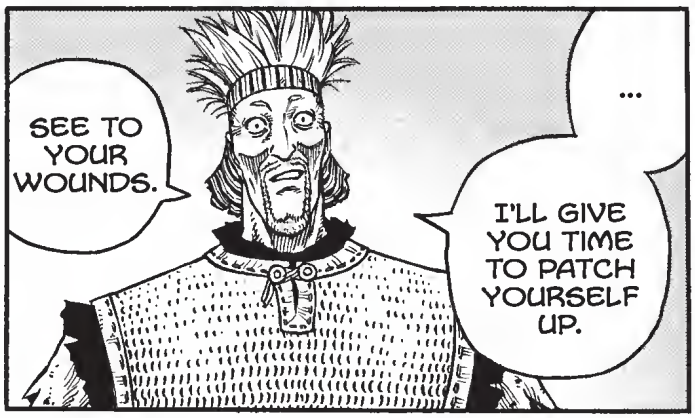


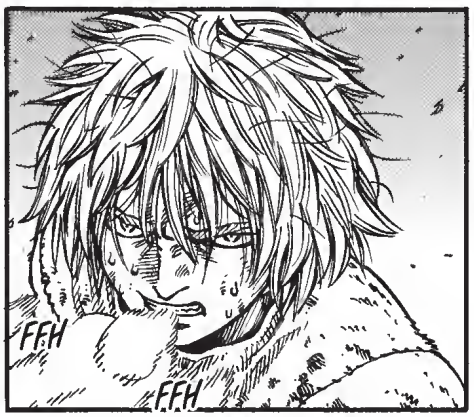

WHO'S THAT...?
HE'S HUGE...

WHAT? WHAT WAS THAT?
DUEL?

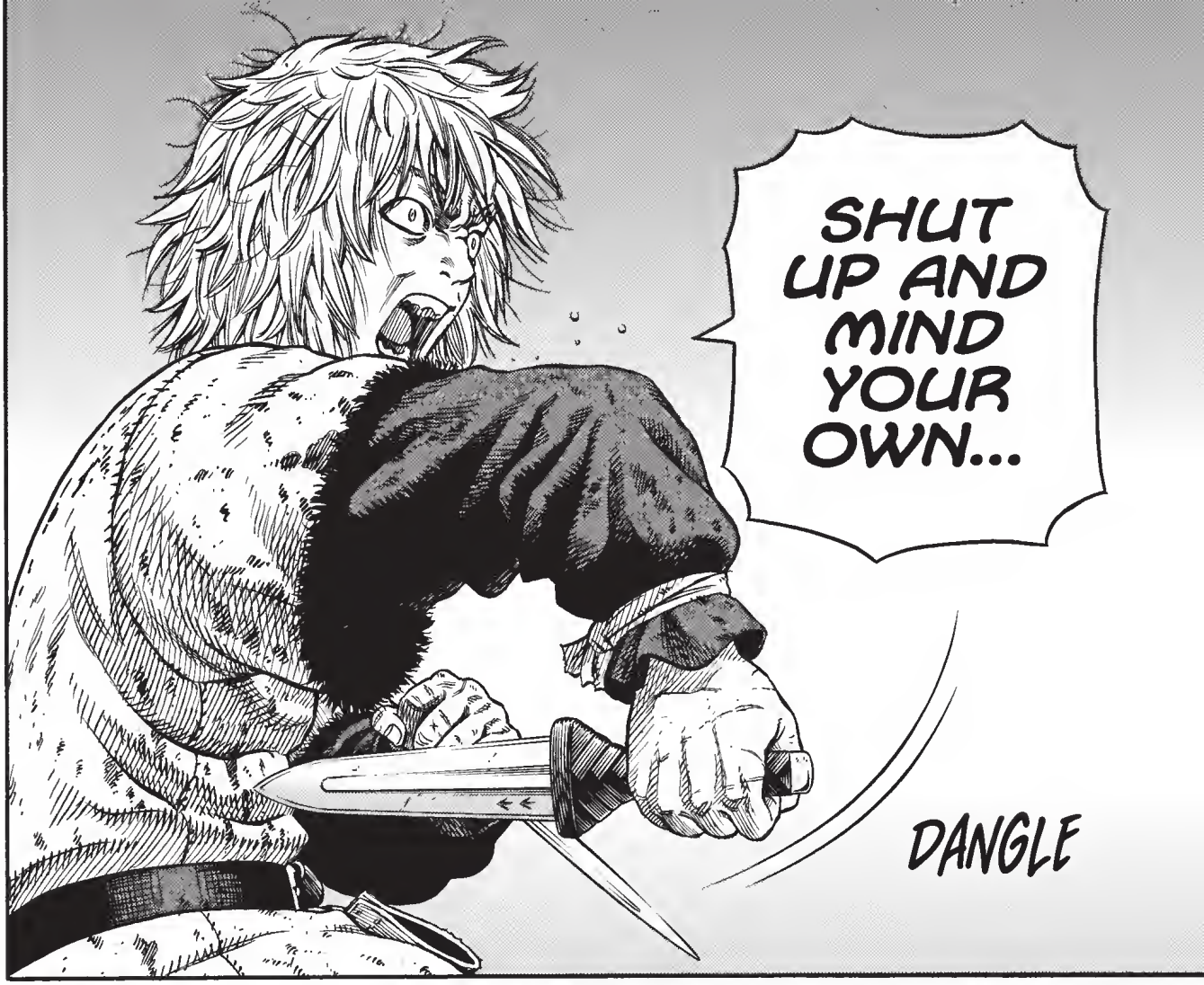

A DUEL...
WE WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF A DUEL.
OH... RIGHT.


SHIT !!
NO TIME TO LIE DOWN !!
ZNFF
OOOOHHH
LOOKS LIKE THERE'S MORE FUN TO BE HAD.
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S ALIVE!
WHAT?! HE'S STANDING !!


SEE TO YOUR WOUNDS.
...
I'LL GIVE YOU TIME TO PATCH YOURSELF UP.

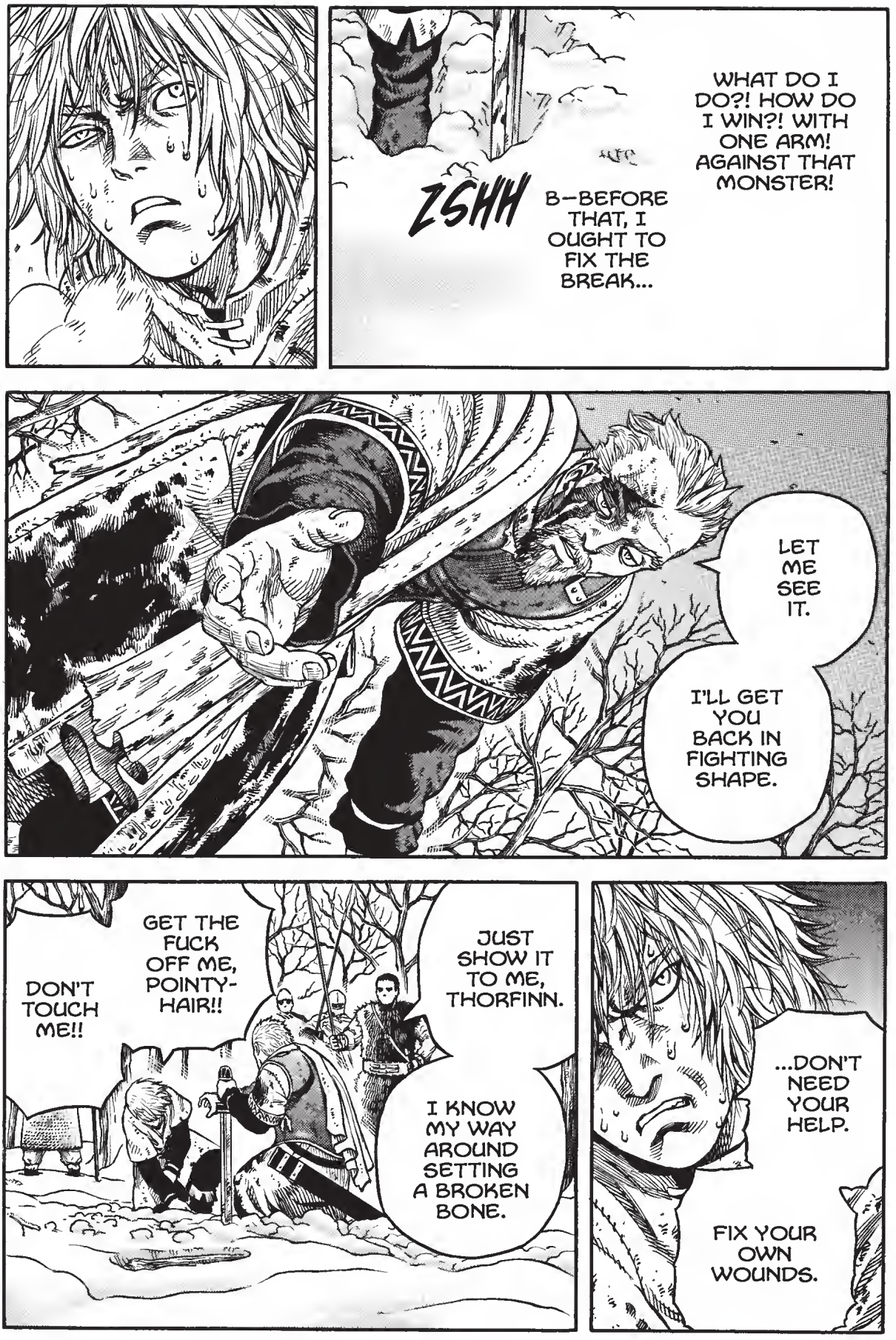

F.F.H
F.F.H

IT'S NOT COURTESY.
I MEAN, HOW WILL YOU FIGHT LIKE THAT?
FUCK OFF!! I DON'T WANT YOUR COURTESY !!

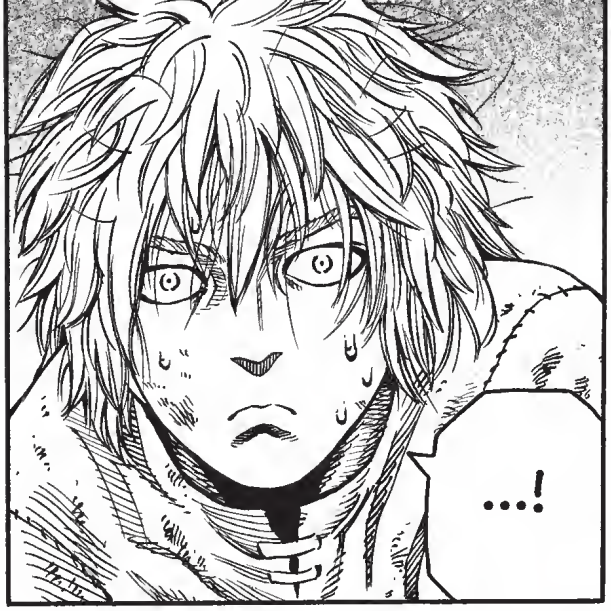

SHUT UP AND MIND YOUR OWN...
DANGLE

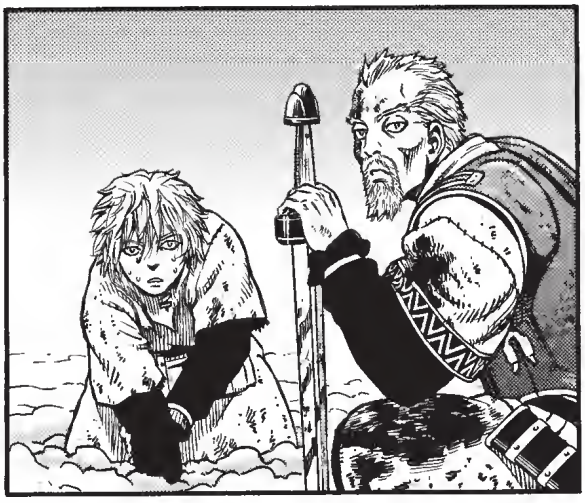
GWUOAHH
THERE, SEE?

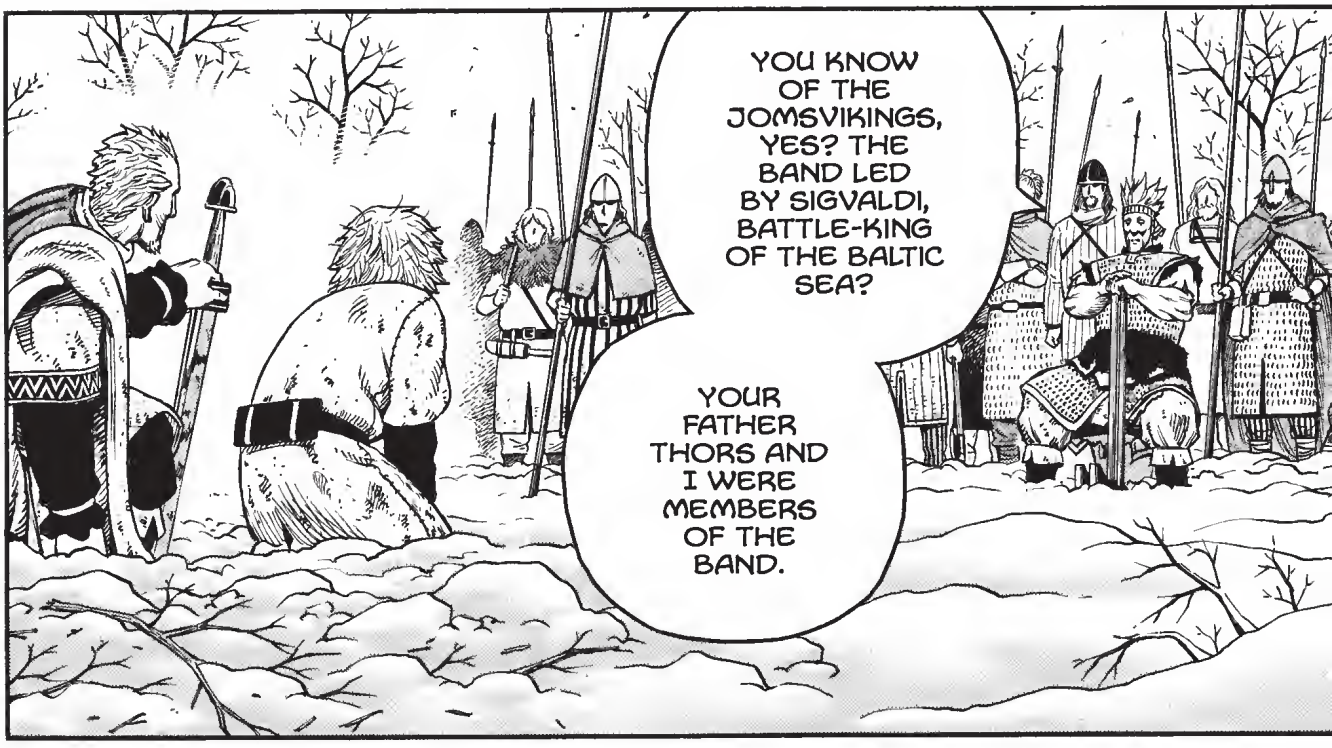
ZSH...
LURP...
ZUSH
NAH, LET HIM GO.
SOMEONE BRING MY SEAT.
NOT NOW, OLD MAN!
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA.
HEY!
SHIT!! FUCK!!
EVERYTHING FLIPPED ON ITS HEAD FROM ONE STUPID KICK!!


WHAT DO I DO?! HOW DO I WIN?! WITH ONE ARM! AGAINST THAT MONSTER!
ISHH
B-BEFORE THAT, I OUGHT TO FIX THE BREAK...
LET ME SEE IT.
I'LL GET YOU BACK IN FIGHTING SHAPE.
...DON'T NEED YOUR HELP.
FIX YOUR OWN WOUNDS.
JUST SHOW IT TO ME, THORFINN.
I KNOW MY WAY AROUND SETTING A BROKEN BONE.
GET THE FUCK OFF ME, POINTY-HAIR!!
DON'T TOUCH ME!!

CALM DOWN. THAT'S YOUR WEAKEST TRAIT.
BE COOL.
CALM YOUR HEAD AND THINK OF A WAY TO WIN, THORFINN.
WHAT DO YOU THINK...
...YOU MUST DO IN ORDER TO WIN?
THORFINN! I HAVEN'T HAD THIS MUCH FUN IN AGES!
AS I PROMISED, I WILL TELL YOU OF YOUR FATHER WHILE YOU TEND TO YOUR ARM.

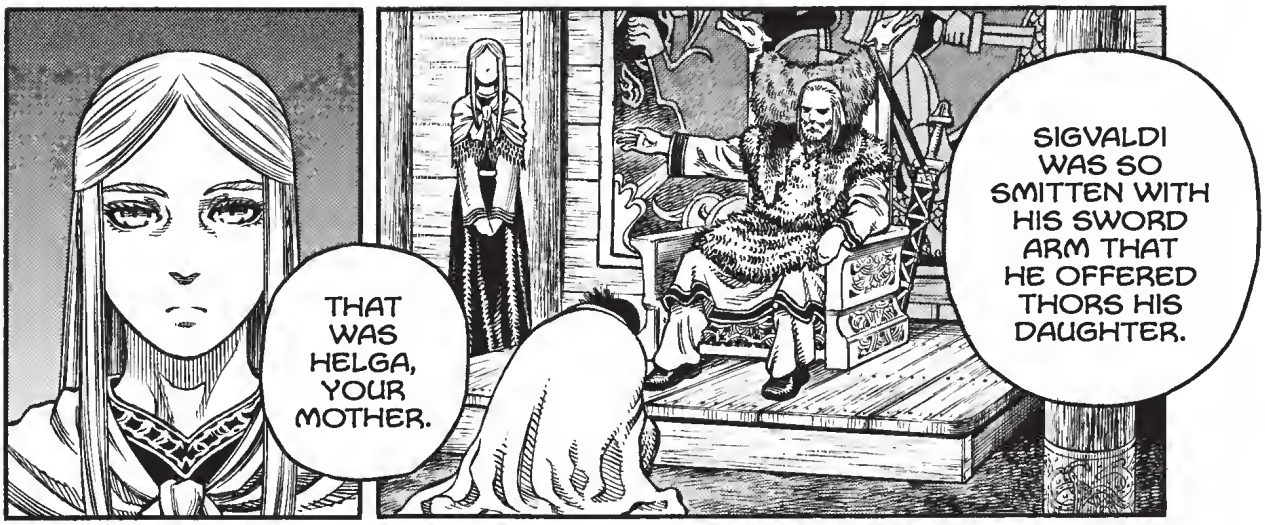

...!

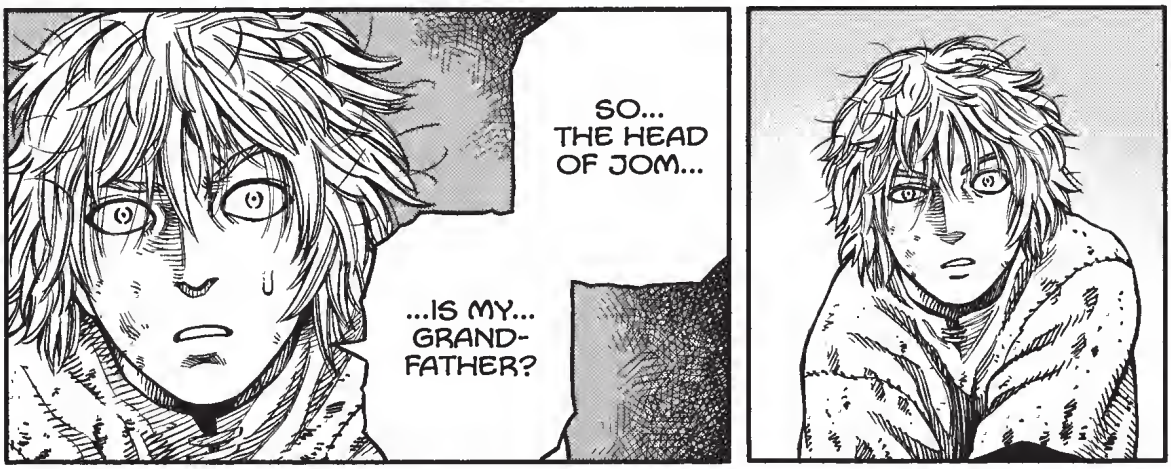



YOU KNOW OF THE JOMSVIKINGS, YES? THE BAND LED BY SIGVALDI, BATTLE-KING OF THE BALTIC SEA?
YOUR FATHER THORS AND I WERE MEMBERS OF THE BAND.

I'M TAKING YOUR KNIFE TO MAKE A SPLINT.
ASK HIM QUESTIONS. KEEP THE STORY ROLLING.

THERE WERE ONLY FOUR OF US, SO THAT SPEAKS TO OUR MIGHT.
WE WERE BOTH CAPTAINS.
AND THORS WAS INDEED MIGHTY.
AN AVERAGE WARRIOR NEVER SNIFFS A SEAT WITH THE JOMSVIKINGS, YET THORS WAS CALLED "TROLL" BY HIS PEERS, THE BEST OF THE BEST.

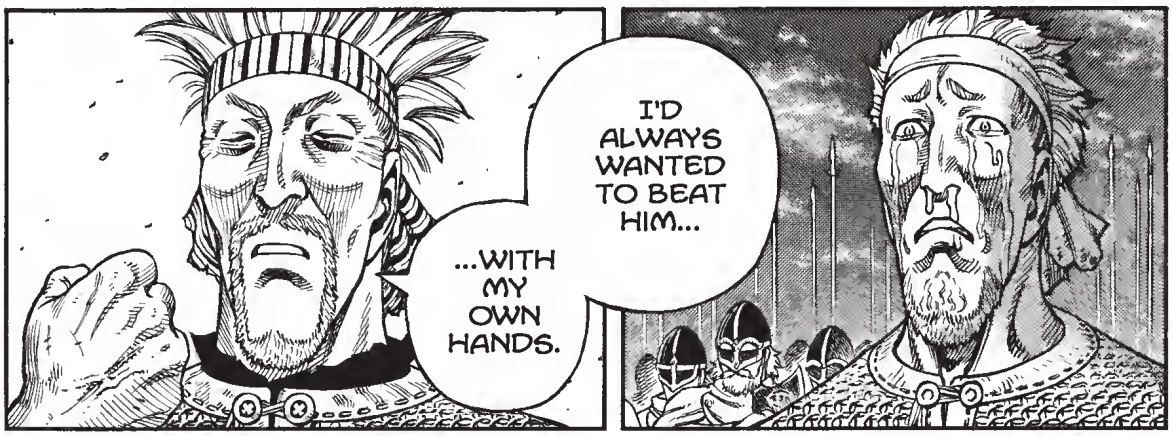

SIGVALDI WAS SO SMITTEN WITH HIS SWORD ARM THAT HE OFFERED THORS HIS DAUGHTER.
THAT WAS HELGA, YOUR MOTHER.

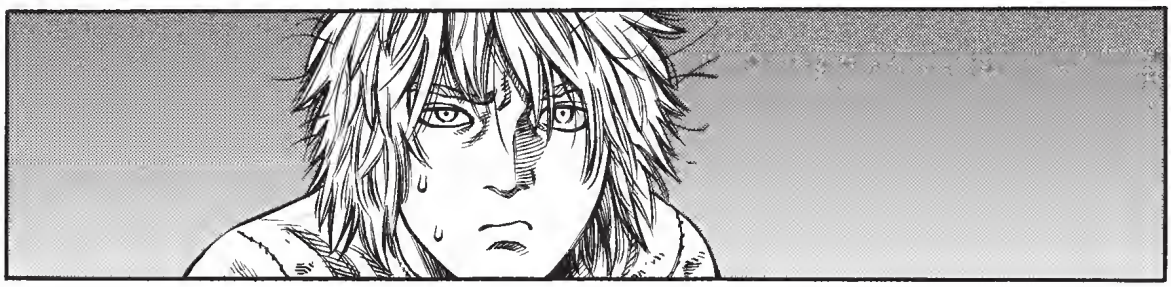

SO... THE HEAD OF JOM...
...IS MY... GRAND-FATHER?

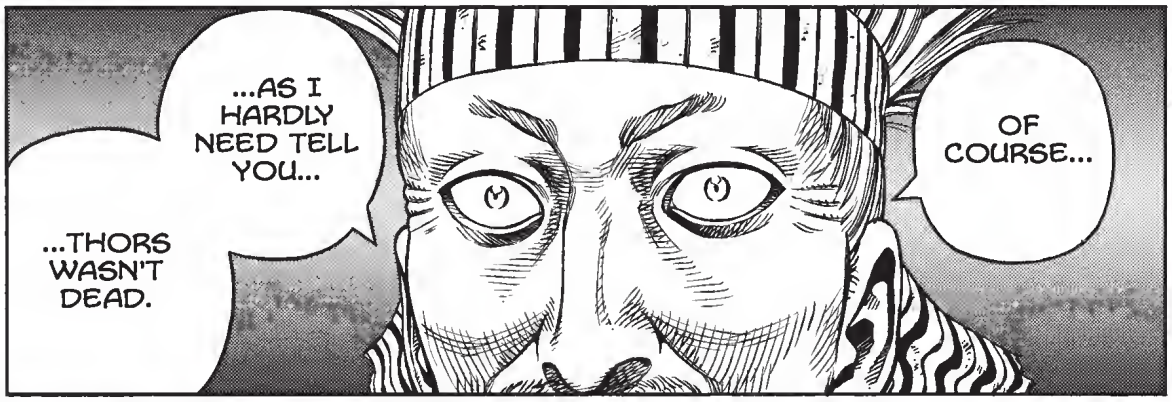
THAT'S RIGHT, AND MY BROTHER.
WHICH MAKES ME YOUR GREAT-UNCLE, AS IT HAPPENS.
MAKES YOU FORGET ALL YOUR PAIN, DOESN'T IT?

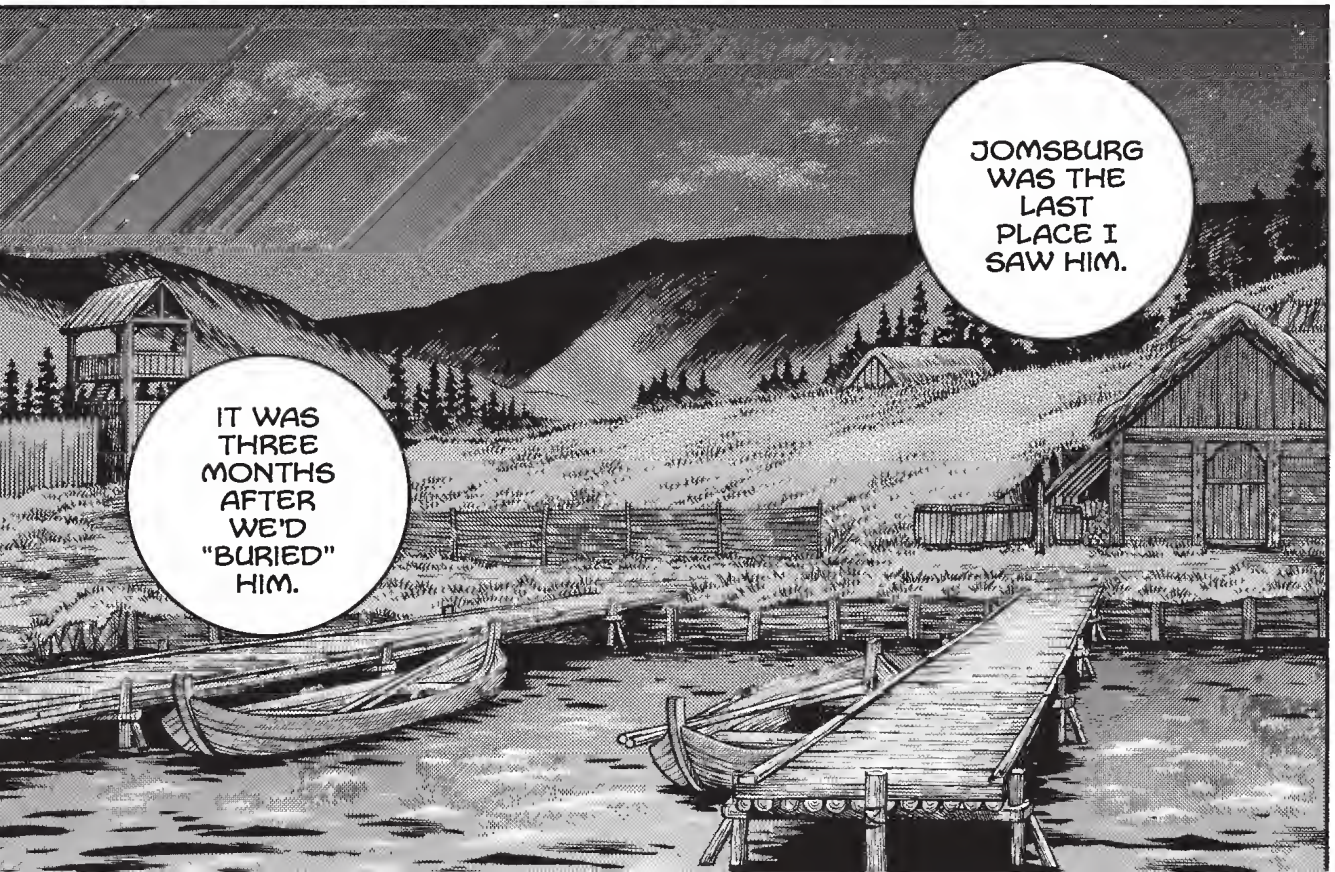
THEY'RE RELAT-ED?
WELL, WELL!
YOU'RE KID-DING.
HE MIGHT AS WELL BE ROYALTY...
YOU CAN'T BE SERI-OUS...
OUR LAST BATTLE WAS AT HJÖRUNGAVÁGR IN NORWAY. WE WERE VANQUISHED.
THORS FELL INTO THE WATER IN FULL ARMOR...
...AND HIS BODY NEVER SURFACED.

WE HAD TO GIVE HIM A FUNERAL WITHOUT A BODY.
I EVEN SHED TEARS FOR HIM.


I'D ALWAYS WANTED TO BEAT HIM...
...WITH MY OWN HANDS.

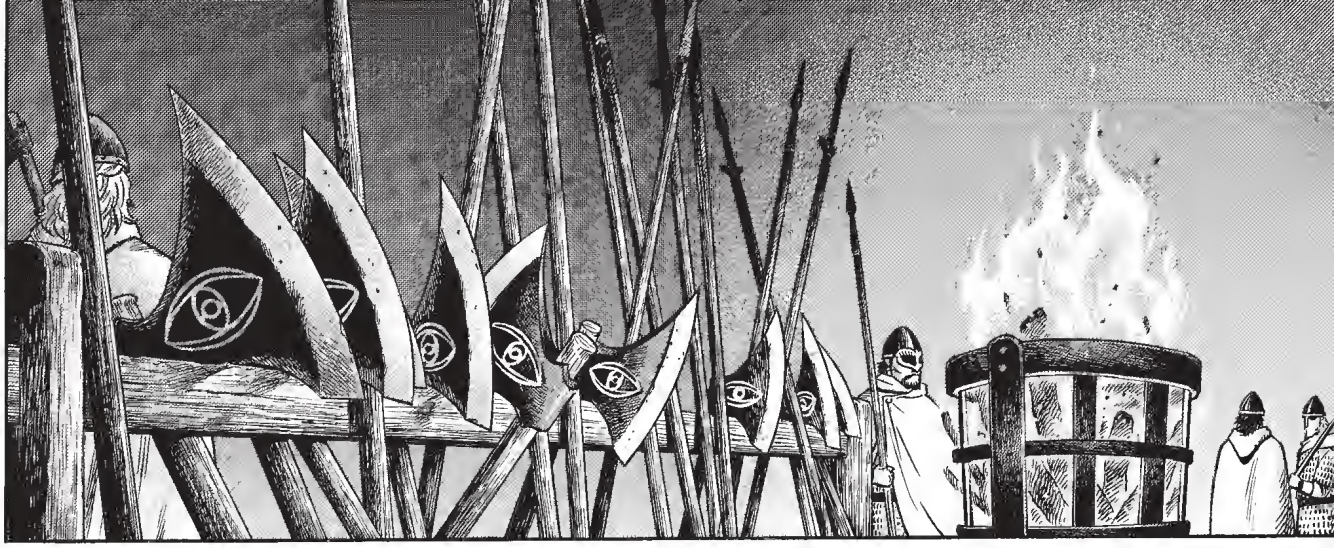


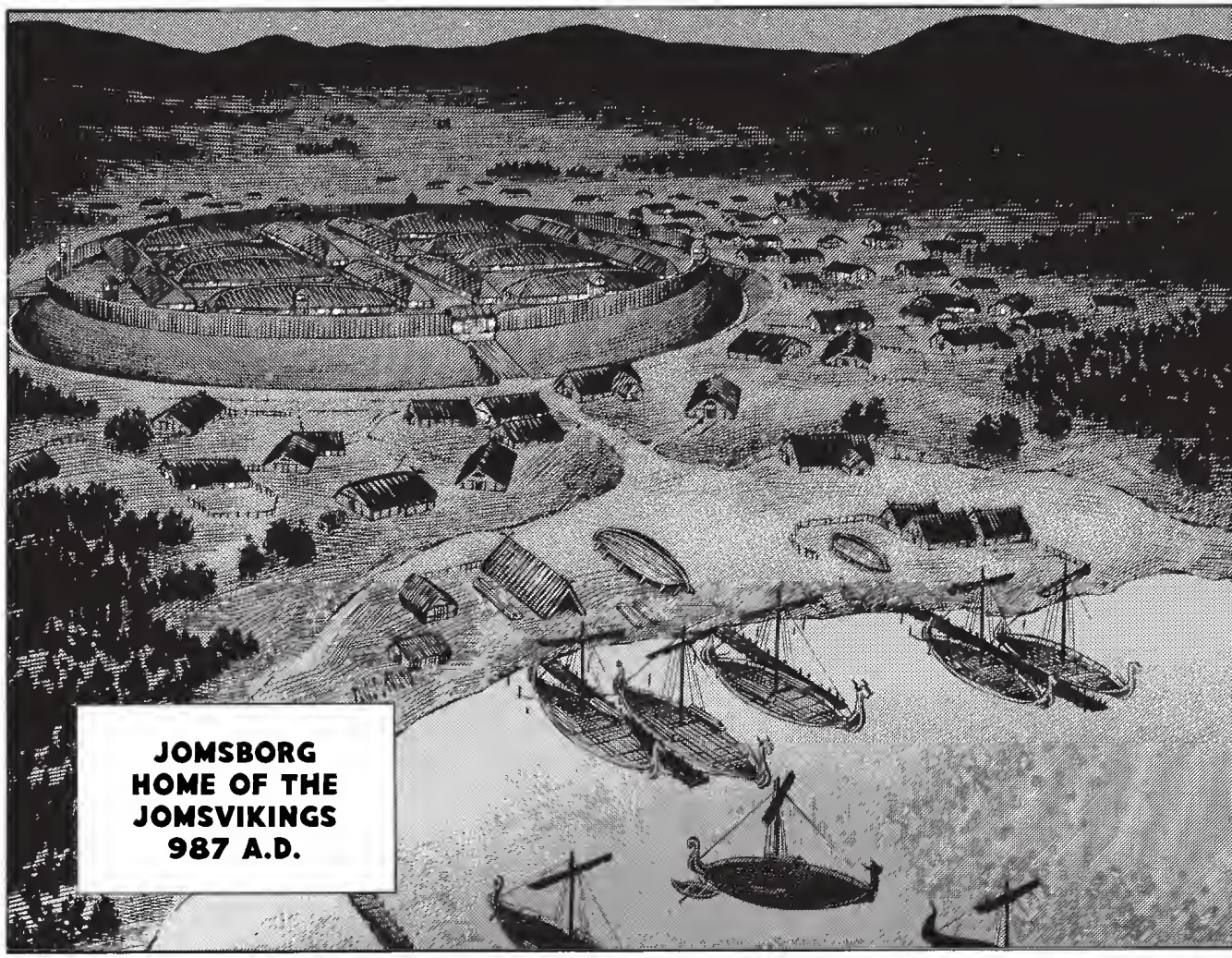

...AS I HARDLY NEED TELL YOU...
OF COURSE...
...THORS WASN'T DEAD.

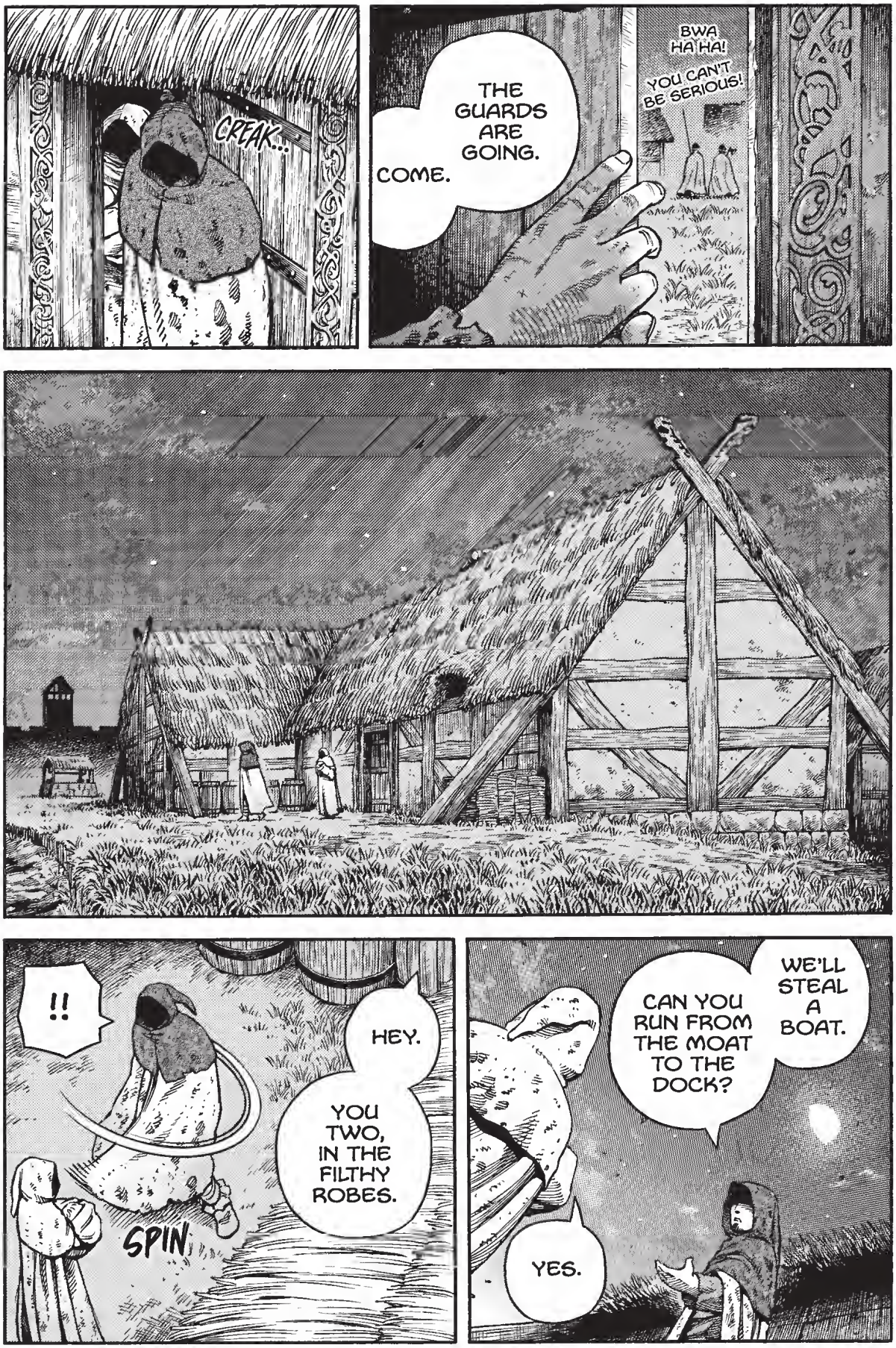

JOMSBURG WAS THE LAST PLACE I SAW HIM.
IT WAS THREE MONTHS AFTER WE'D "BURIED" HIM.

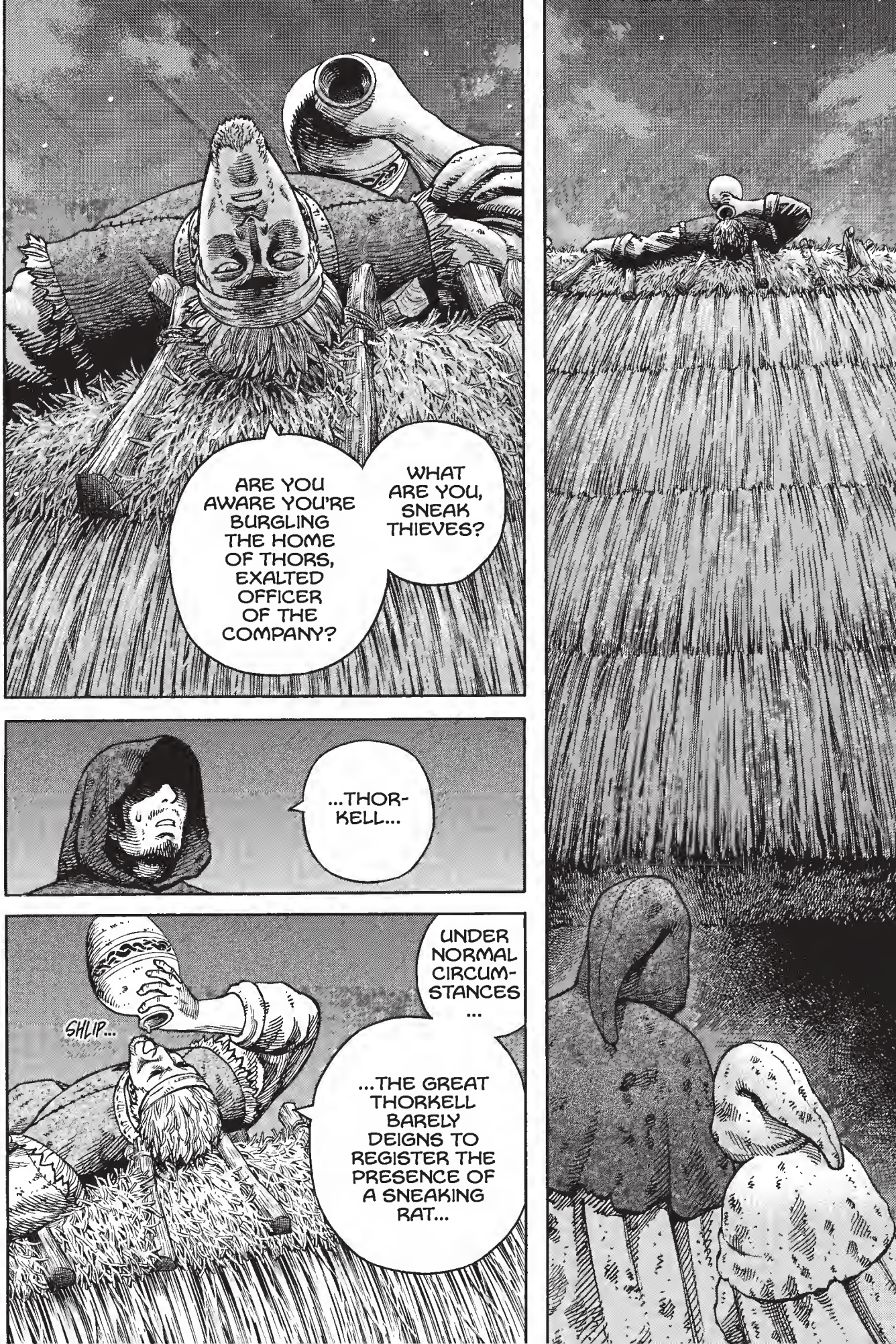
CHAPTER 39 - END

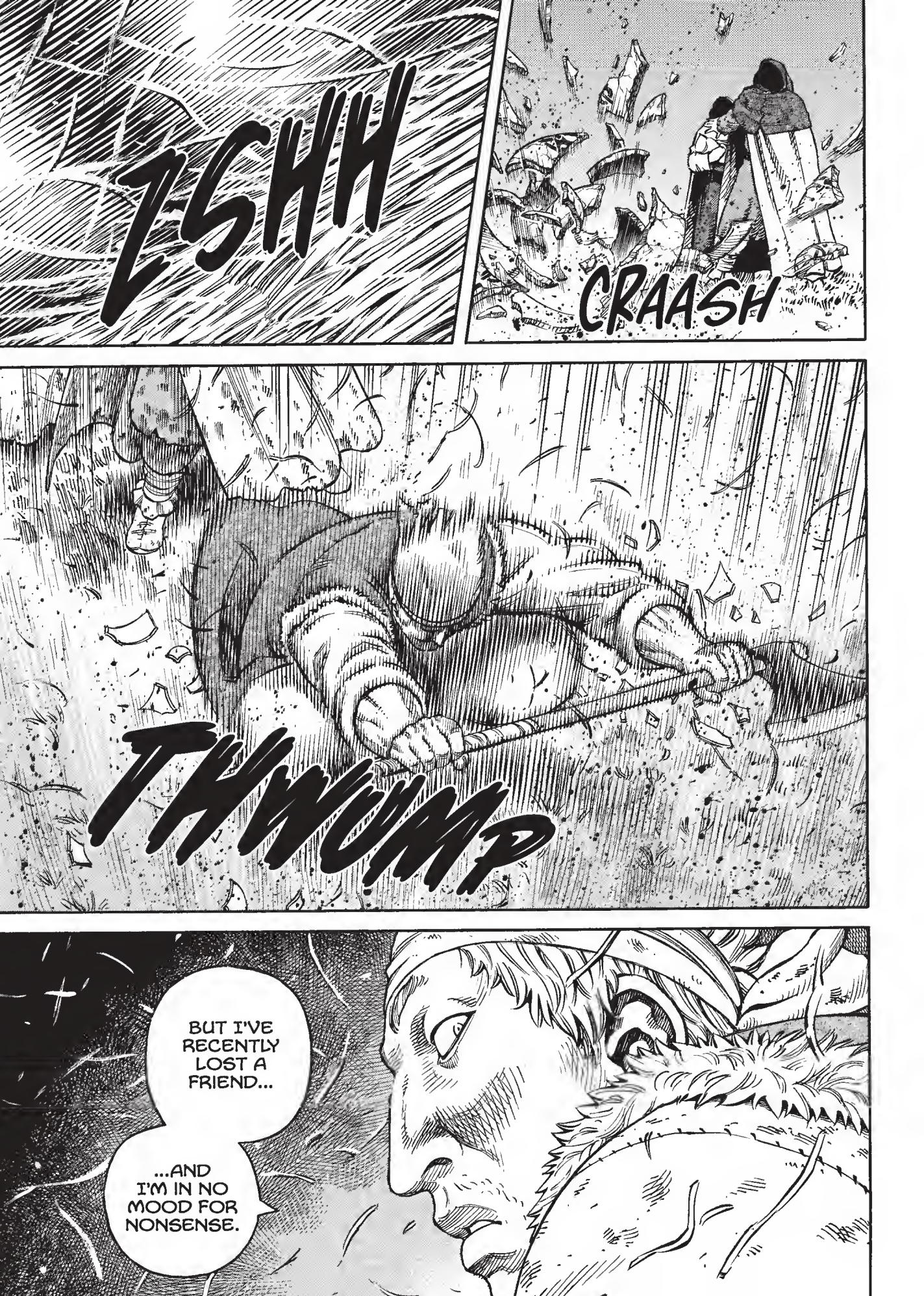
CHAPTER 40:
THE LEGEND OF THORS




JOMSBORG
HOME OF THE
JOMSVIKINGS
987 A.D.


CREAK...
COME.
THE GUARDS ARE GOING.
BWA HA HA!
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!
!!
SPIN
HEY.
YOU TWO, IN THE FILTHY ROBES.
CAN YOU RUN FROM THE MOAT TO THE DOCK?
WE'LL STEAL A BOAT.
YES.


ARE YOU AWARE YOU'RE BURGLING THE HOME OF THORS, EXALTED OFFICER OF THE COMPANY?
WHAT ARE YOU, SNEAK THIEVES?
...THOR-KELL...
SHLIP...
UNDER NORMAL CIRCUM-STANCES ...
...THE GREAT THORKELL BARELY DEIGNS TO REGISTER THE PRESENCE OF A SNEAKING RAT...


TSHH
CRAASH
THUMP
BUT I'VE RECENTLY LOST A FRIEND...
...AND I'M IN NO MOOD FOR NONSENSE.

ZSH...
SHAKK
GRSH
HMPH!
ZA
KK

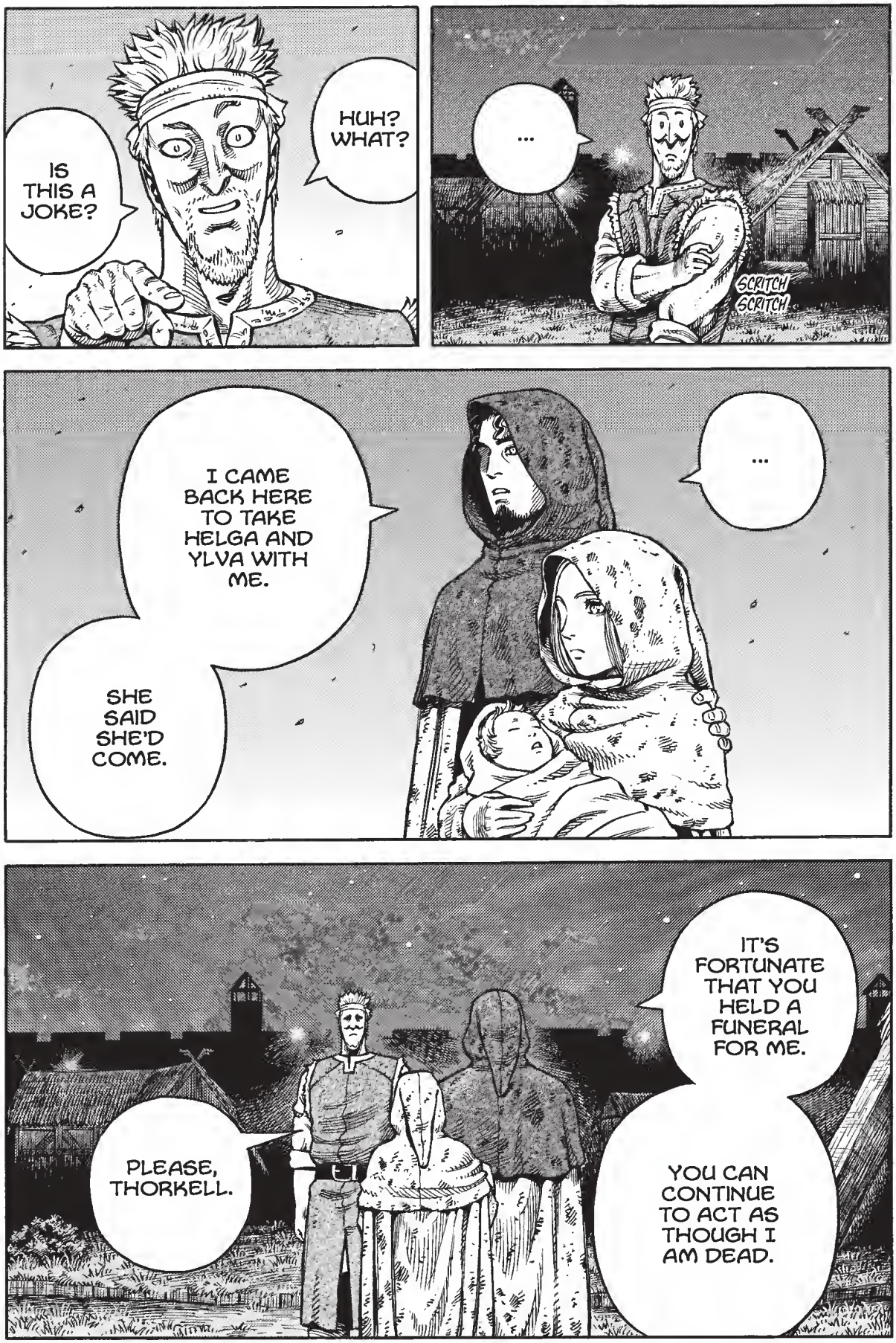
BNNG...
?!
...
...THORS...?

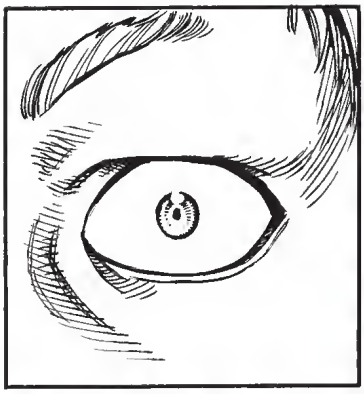
HOW DID YOU-?!
THORS !!
IS THAT...
BUT YOU...
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!!
HA-HA! YOU'RE ALIVE, YOU GREAT FOOL!!
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN FOR ALL THESE MONTHS?! WE EVEN GAVE YOU A PROPER FUNERAL AT SEA!!
HA HA HA HA HA
I'M SORRY FOR PUTTING YOU THROUGH ALL OF THAT.
A-ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT.
SETTLE DOWN, THORKELL.

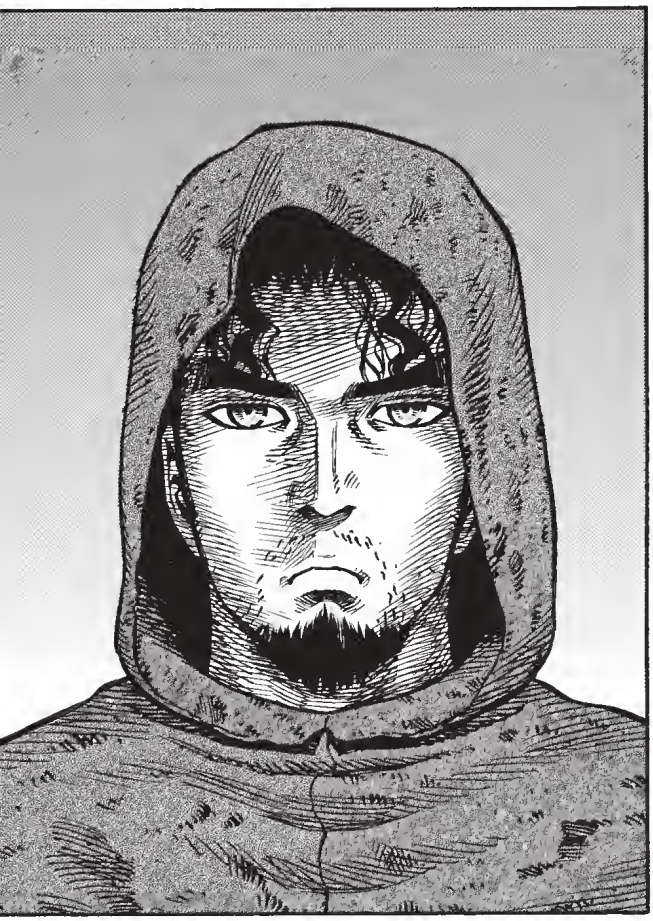
OH? WELL, WELL, IF IT ISN'T HELGA WITH YOU!
HA HA HA
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU TWO, DRESSED LIKE COMMON PEASANTS?
IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GOING ON A PILGRIMAGE.
UHM...
LISTEN, UNCLE...
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN! A LITTLE DIP IN THE OCEAN COULD NEVER KILL YOU!
EXCUSE ME, UNCLE. WE'RE...
HAVE YOU ALREADY SPOKEN TO MY BROTHER?
WHAT, NOT YET? DON'T WORRY, I'LL GO SMACK HIM AWAKE FOR YOU. CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE LOOK ON HIS FACE!
THOR-KELL.
THOR-KELL.
LISTEN TO ME.

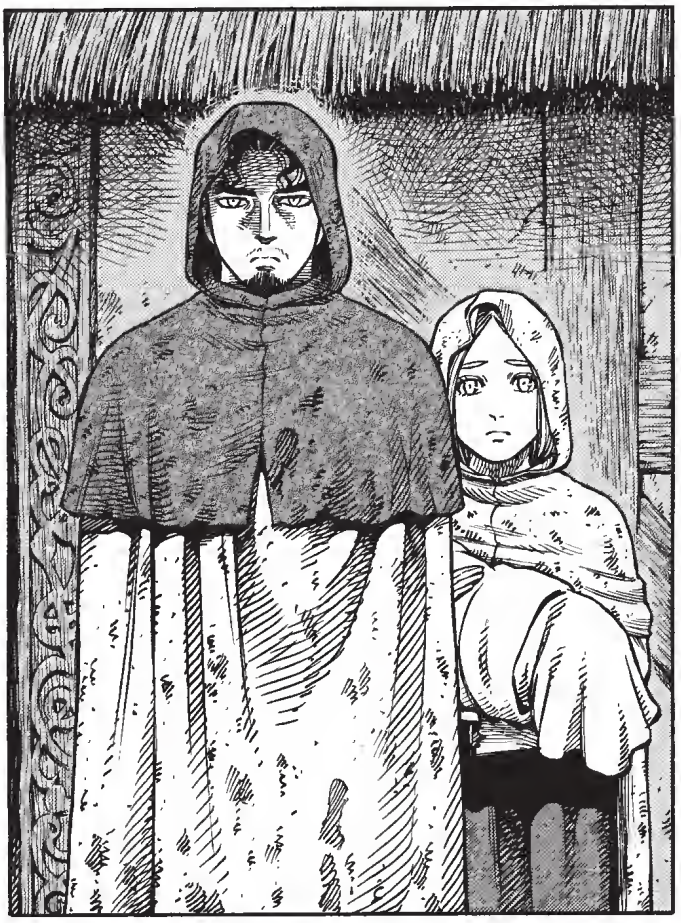
OF COURSE! LET'S FIND A COMFORT-ABLE PLACE TO CATCH UP.
COME TO MY HOUSE! SHARE MY FINEST MEAD!
WHAT?
WHAT IS IT, THORS?
I'M NOT MEETING THE CHIEF.
WE ARE LEAVING.

DIDN'T YOU JUST GET BACK?
WHAT FOR? RIGHT NOW? MAKE IT TOMORROW!
I AM LEAVING THIS PLACE... LEAVING THE JOMS-VIKINGS.
I WANT YOU TO FORGET THAT YOU SAW ME TONIGHT, THORKELL.


IS THIS A JOKE?
HUH? WHAT?
...
SCRITCH SCRITCH
I CAME BACK HERE TO TAKE HELGA AND YLVA WITH ME.
SHE SAID SHE'D COME.
...
IT'S FORTUNATE THAT YOU HELD A FUNERAL FOR ME.
YOU CAN CONTINUE TO ACT AS THOUGH I AM DEAD.
PLEASE, THORKELL.

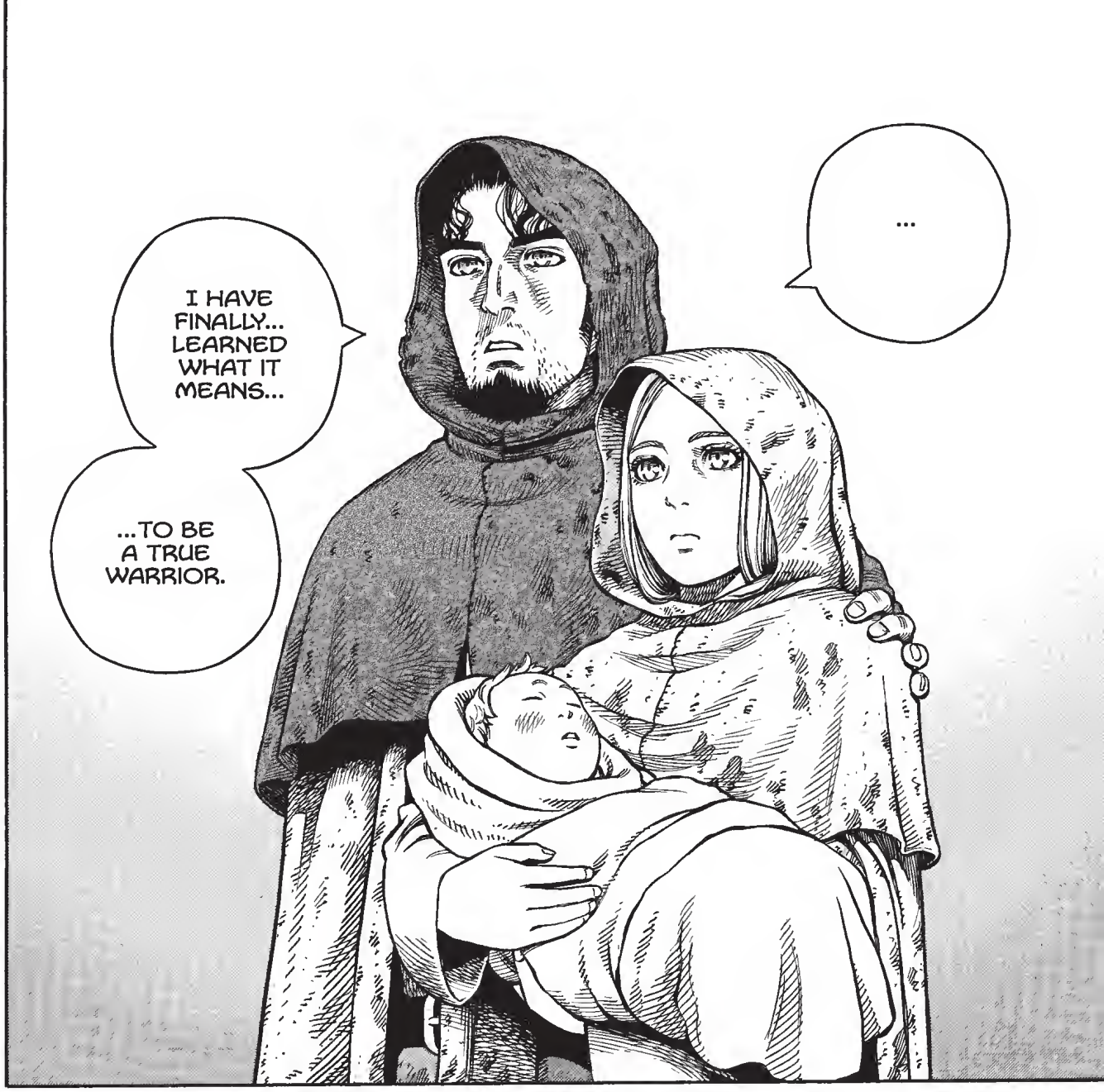


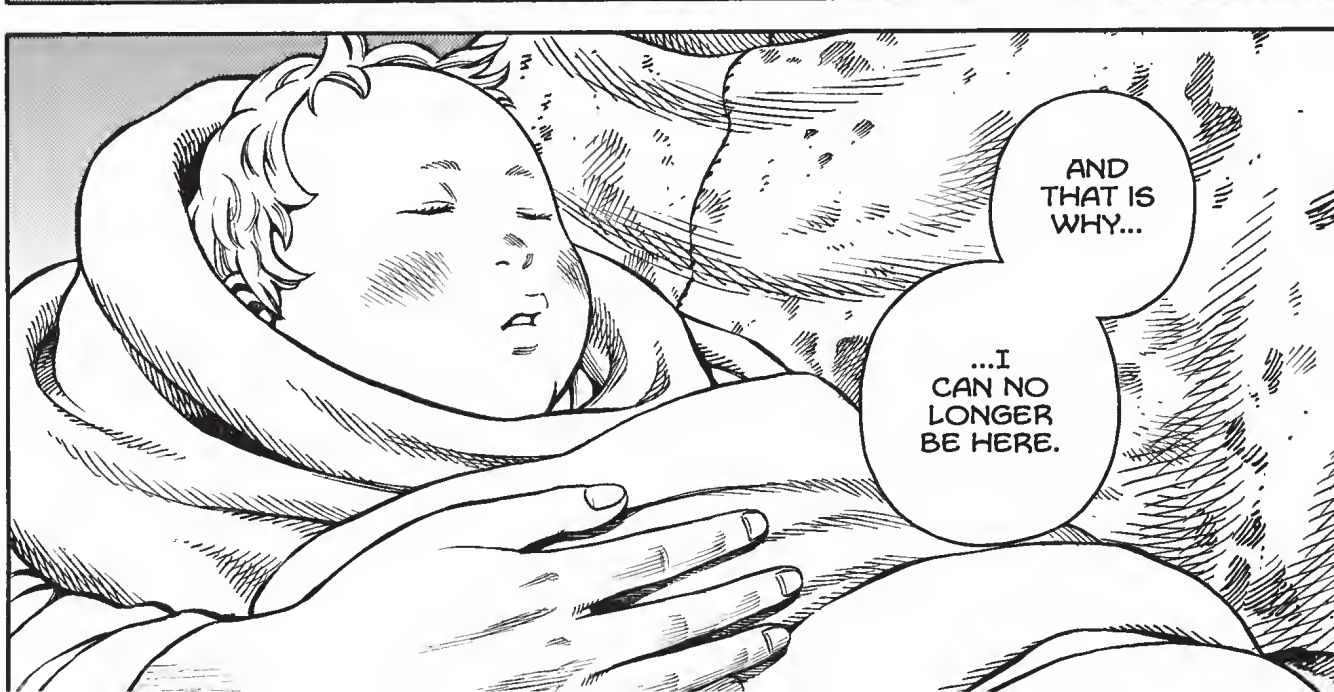




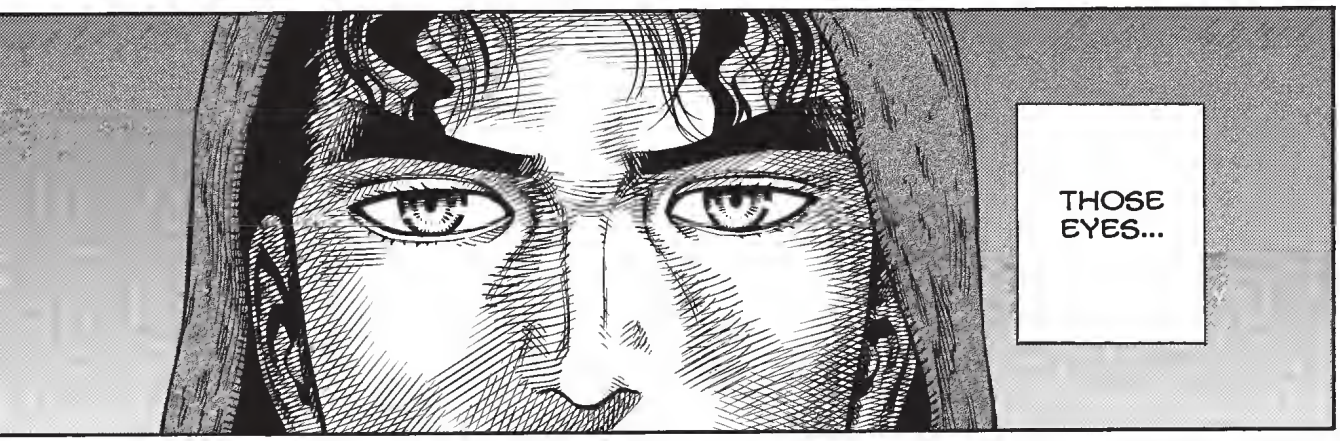
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
...I'M NOT SEEING THE POINT.
DID YOU PUT THORS UP TO THIS?
HELGA. YOU ALWAYS HATED COMBAT.
NO. THIS IS MY IDEA.
I'M DONE FIGHTING.
UNCLE...

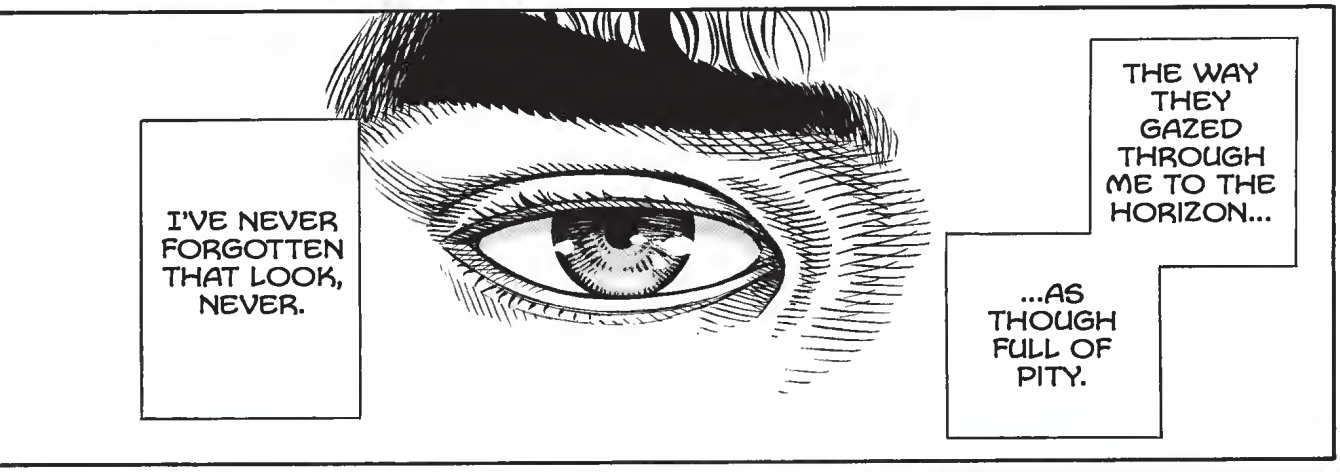
THAT'S MY POINT! I DON'T UNDER-STAND!
YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME... YOU FAKED YOUR OWN DEATH BECAUSE YOU WERE AFRAID OF FIGHTING, ARE YOU?
AND JUST AFTER YOU CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD...
...THIS JUST ISN'T FUNNY.
DID YOU KNOW MY BROTHER WAS CONSIDERING YOU AS HIS SUCCESSOR? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA?
GET SOMETHING TO EAT AND A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP, THORS.
YOU'RE TIRED, AIN'T YA?
...FORGIVE ME.

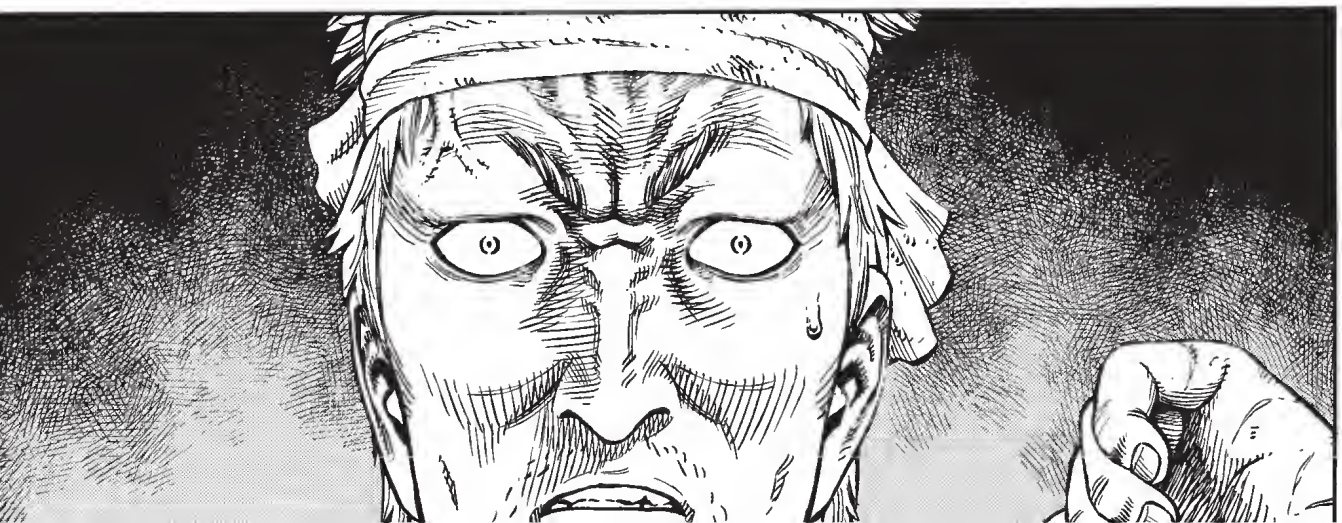

...
I HAVE FINALLY... LEARNED WHAT IT MEANS...
...TO BE A TRUE WARRIOR.


AND THAT IS WHY...
...I CAN NO LONGER BE HERE.

...THAT THORS WAS SERIOUS.
THAT WAS THE MOMENT I FINALLY REALIZED...

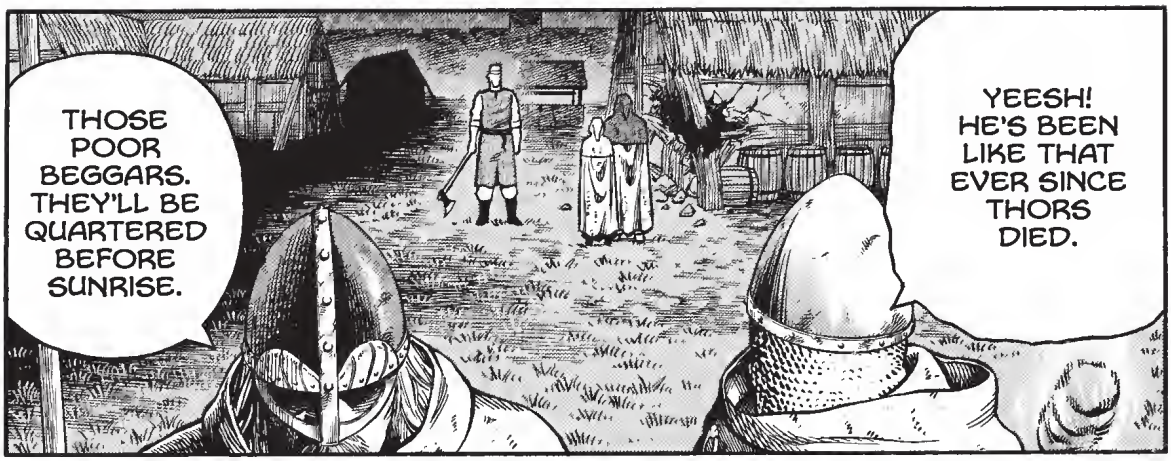

THOSE EYES...

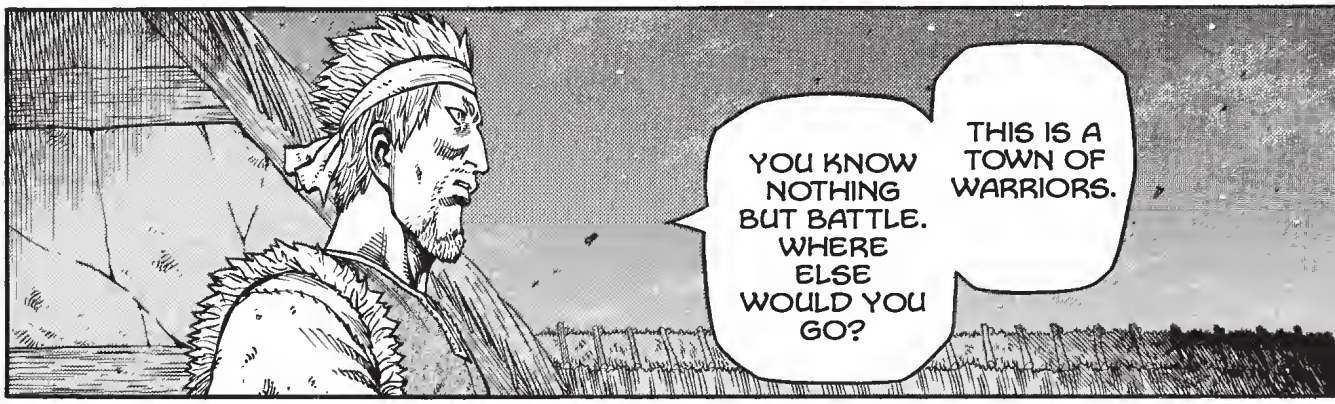

I'VE NEVER FORGOTTEN THAT LOOK, NEVER.
THE WAY THEY GAZED THROUGH ME TO THE HORIZON...
...AS THOUGH FULL OF PITY.

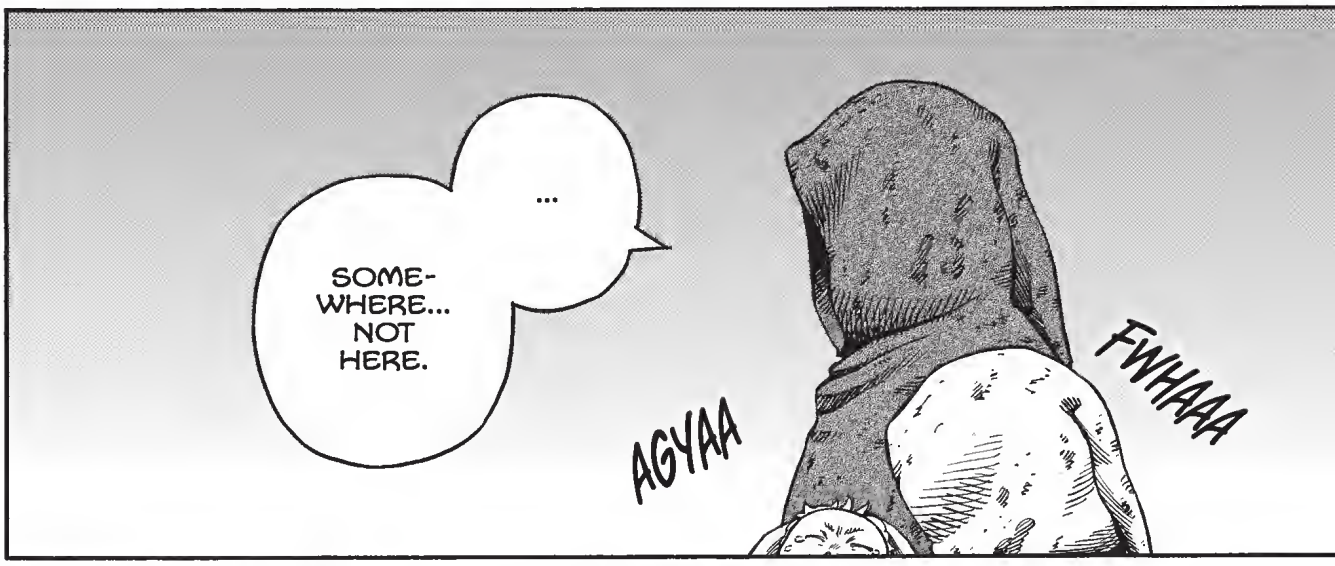


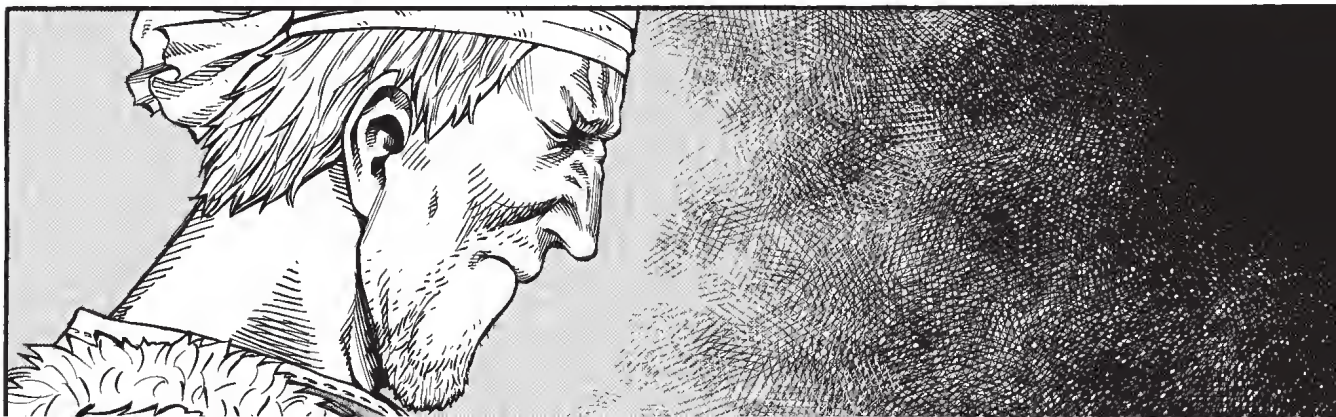
SHAKK
GLASHUNK
PITTER
PITTER
YOU KNOW OUR LAWS.
DEFECTION WITHOUT THE CHIEF'S LEAVE IS PUNISHABLE BY DEATH.

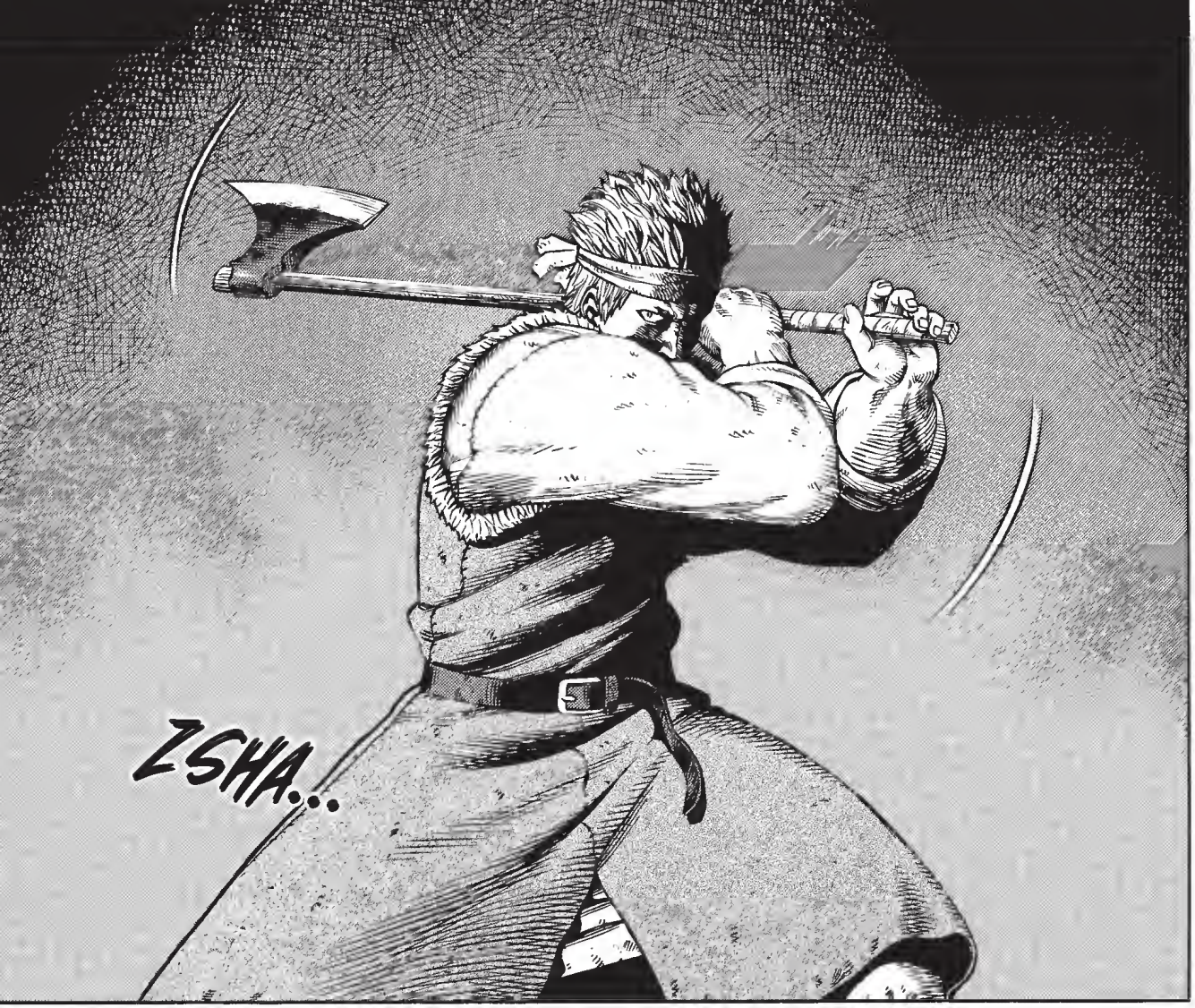
!!
WHAT'S HAPPENING, THORKELL ?!
HNGYAA
AWAAAA
IT'S NOTHING. I'M JUST HUMORING SOME MISERABLE BEGGARS.
GO ON.
...
GYAAA
AWAAA
HWAAAA
OFF WITH YOUR HOODS!
WE NEED A LOOK AT YOUR FACES.
BEGGARS? IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT...?
RIGHT AWAY, SIR!!
Y-YES, SIR!!
I SAID GET BACK TO YOUR STATIONS OR FACE MY AXE!!


THOSE POOR BEGGARS. THEY'LL BE QUARTERED BEFORE SUNRISE.
YEESH! HE'S BEEN LIKE THAT EVER SINCE THORS DIED.

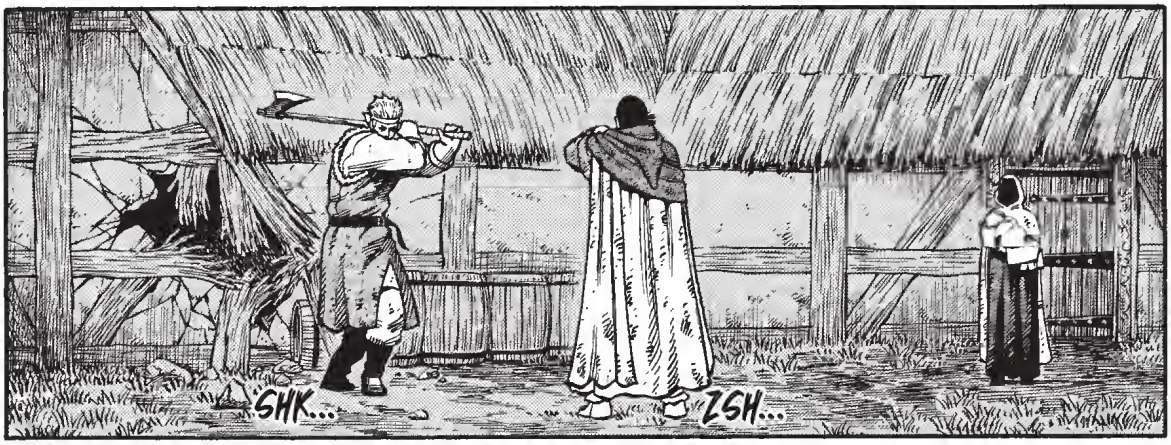

YOU KNOW NOTHING BUT BATTLE. WHERE ELSE WOULD YOU GO?
THIS IS A TOWN OF WARRIORS.


...
SOME-WHERE... NOT HERE.
AGYAA
FWHAAA




ZSHA...

THORS...
DON'T WORRY.
JUST STAND BACK.

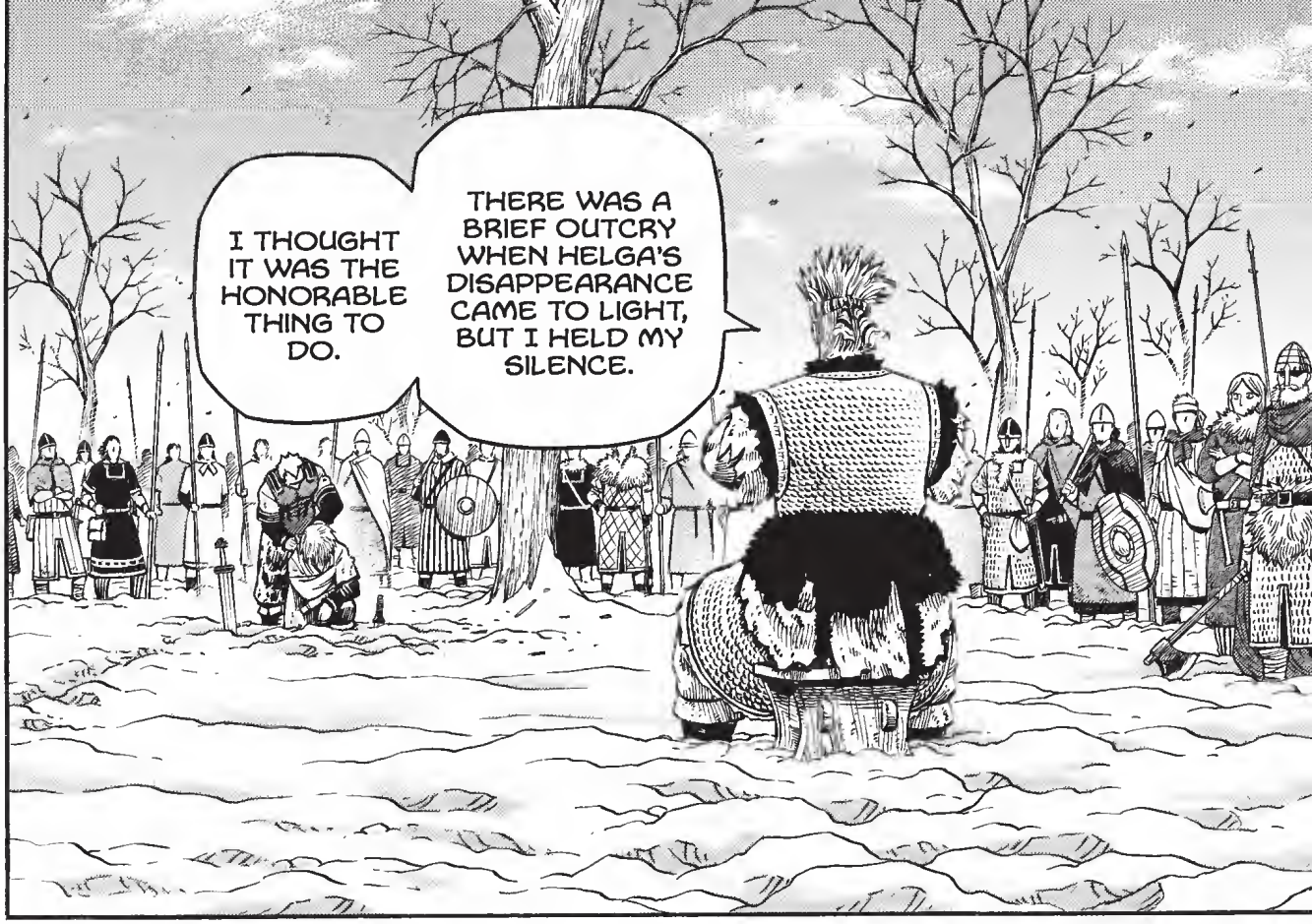

SHK...
ZSH...

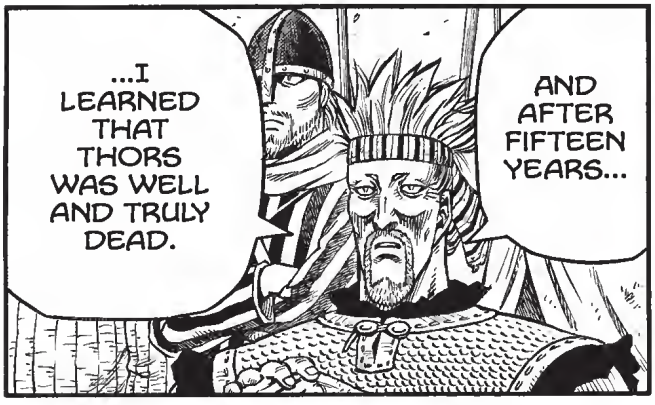
BEST OF HEALTH, THORKELL.
FLAP...
DON'T NEED IT.
...
WHERE'S YOUR SWORD?
SNAP

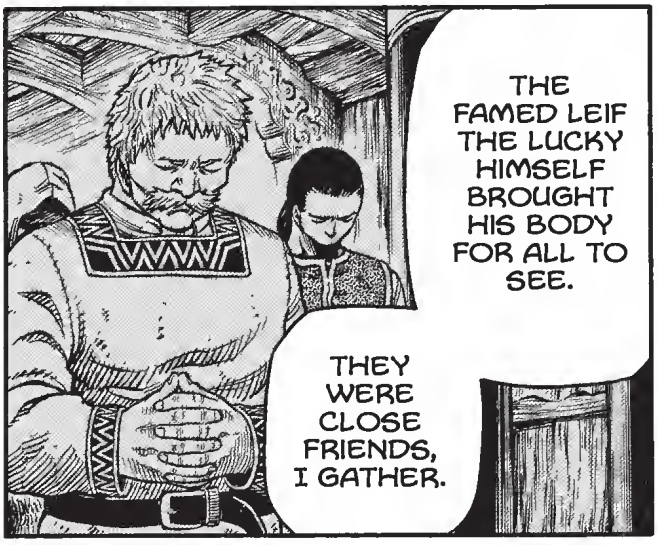
RRGH!!
GYAAA
BSHH

KRAKK
WHOOSH
SHPP

POW
...THE NEXT THING I KNEW, THE LOOKOUTS WERE SHAKING ME AWAKE.
THORS AND HIS WIFE WERE LONG GONE.

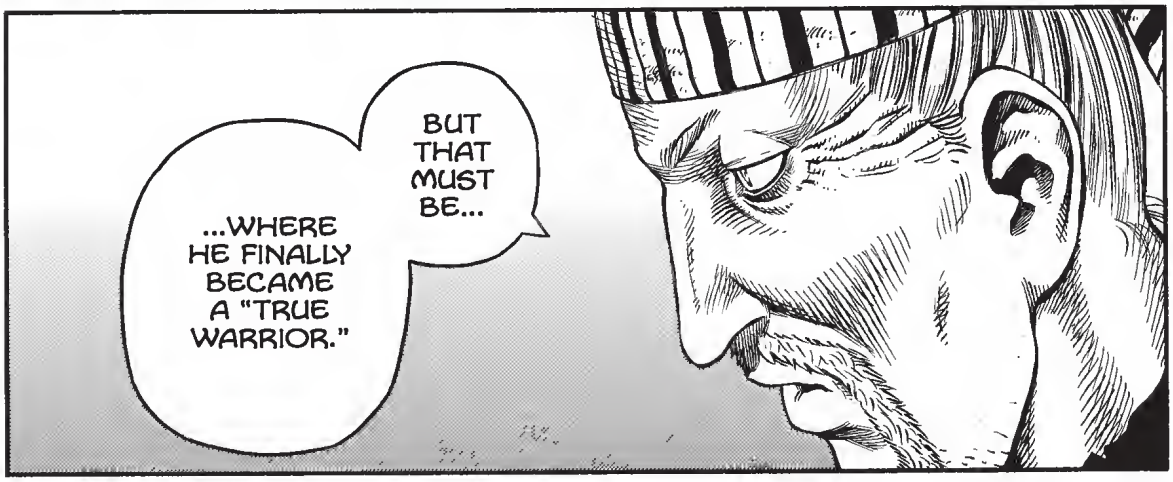

I THOUGHT IT WAS THE HONORABLE THING TO DO.
THERE WAS A BRIEF OUTCRY WHEN HELGA'S DISAPPEARANCE CAME TO LIGHT, BUT I HELD MY SILENCE.

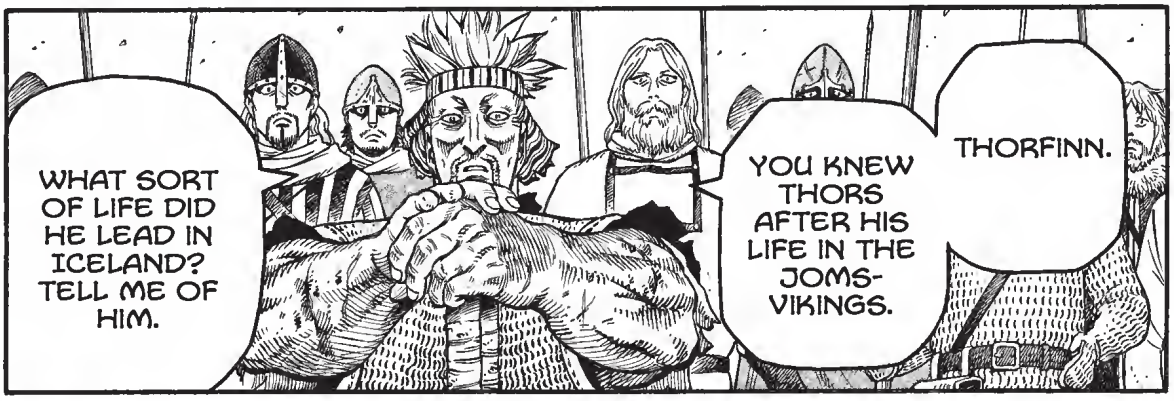

...I LEARNED THAT THORS WAS WELL AND TRULY DEAD.
AND AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS...

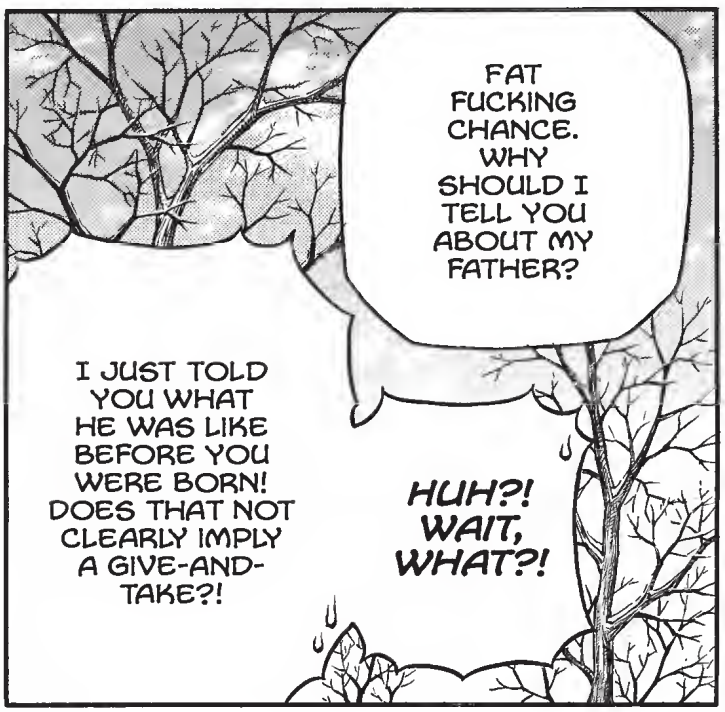

THE FAMED LEIF THE LUCKY HIMSELF BROUGHT HIS BODY FOR ALL TO SEE.
THEY WERE CLOSE FRIENDS, I GATHER.

SO LEIF ERICSON WAS IN THAT GROUP?
HMM.
NO IDEA.
THIS IS SO HUMILIAT-ING...
I'M BEING BANDAGED BY THE VERY MAN WHO KILLED MY FATHER...
AND I REALIZED THAT IT WASN'T A MATTER OF THE LIFE OR DEATH OF THE FLESH.
I'D HAD FIFTEEN YEARS TO THINK ABOUT HIM.
BUT I DID NOT SHED ANY TEARS AT THAT NEWS.
WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO A WARRIOR IS THE SOUL...
...AND WHERE IT LIES.

HIS SOUL HAD GONE FAR AWAY.
I STILL DON'T UNDER-STAND IT. I CAN'T REACH HIM.
WHEREVER IT IS, IT'S NOT HERE.

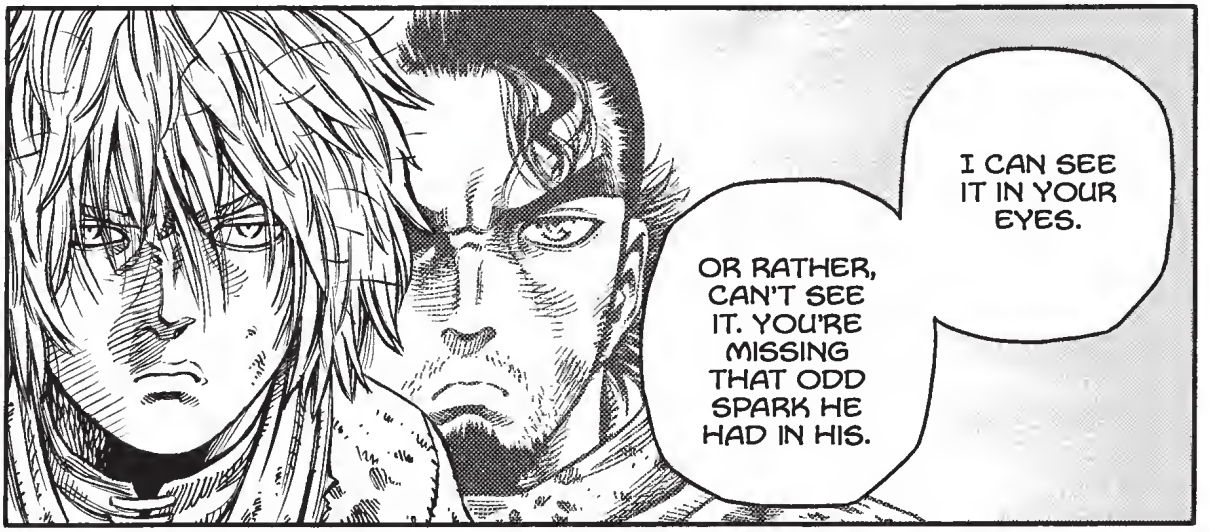

BUT THAT MUST BE...
...WHERE HE FINALLY BECAME A "TRUE WARRIOR."

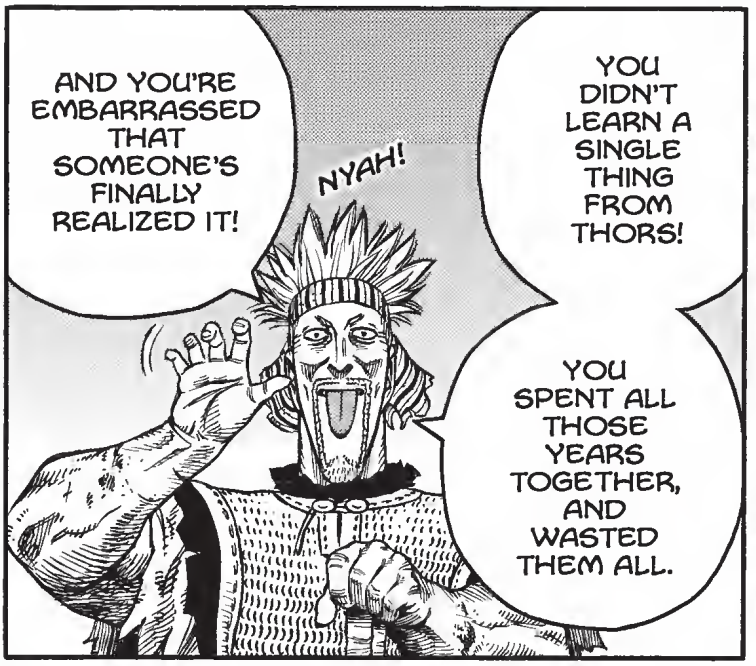

THORFINN.
YOU KNEW THORS AFTER HIS LIFE IN THE JOMS-VIKINGS.
WHAT SORT OF LIFE DID HE LEAD IN ICELAND? TELL ME OF HIM.

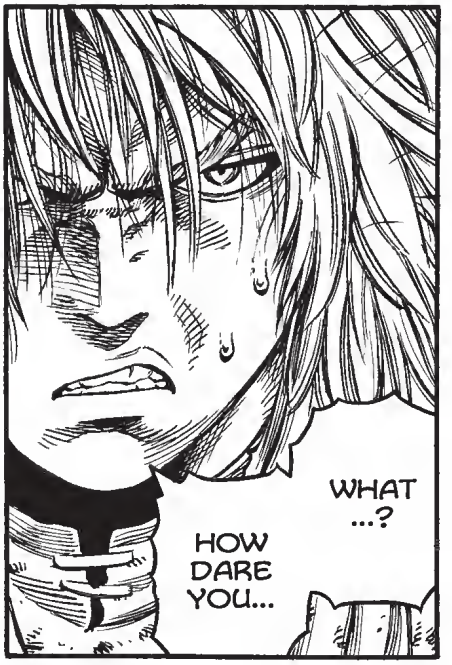

FAT FUCKING CHANCE. WHY SHOULD I TELL YOU ABOUT MY FATHER?
I JUST TOLD YOU WHAT HE WAS LIKE BEFORE YOU WERE BORN! DOES THAT NOT CLEARLY IMPLY A GIVE-AND-TAKE?!
HUH?! WAIT, WHAT?!

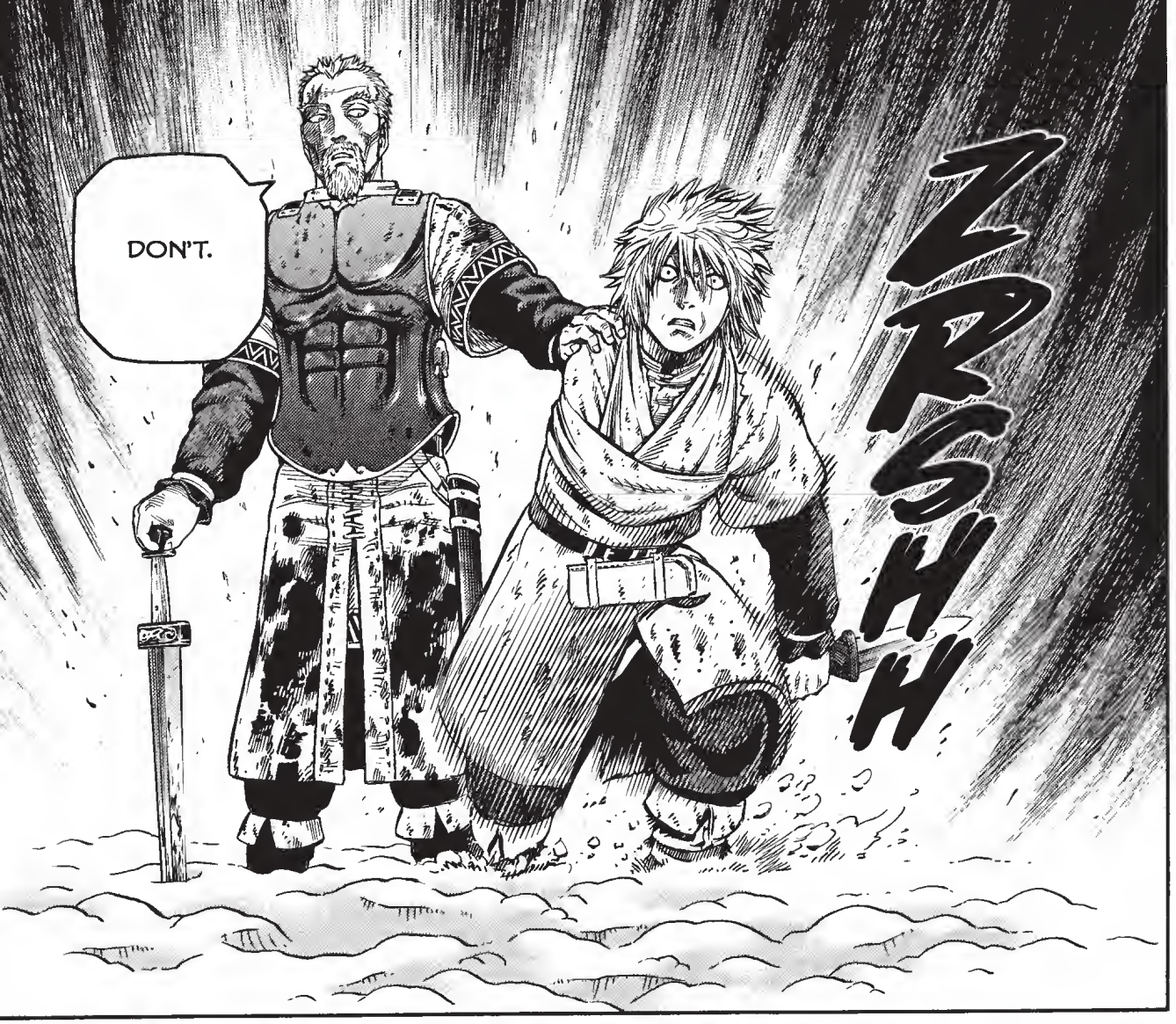
...HMPH ...

I BET I KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE.
IT'S NOT THAT YOU WON'T TELL ME, IT'S THAT YOU CAN'T!!
DUMB LITTLE SHRIMP!
BAH!! YOU MISERABLE SKINFLINT!

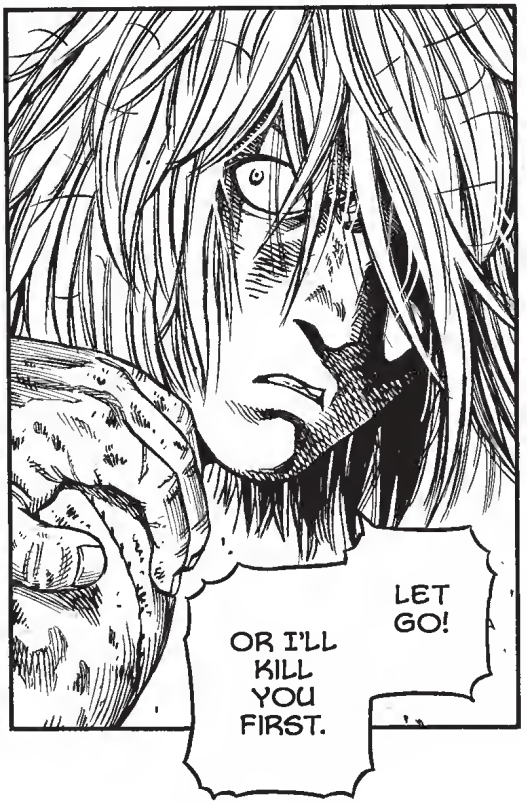

I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR EYES.
OR RATHER, CAN'T SEE IT. YOU'RE MISSING THAT ODD SPARK HE HAD IN HIS.


AND YOU'RE EMBARRASSED THAT SOMEONE'S FINALLY REALIZED IT!
NYAH!
YOU DIDN'T LEARN A SINGLE THING FROM THORS!
YOU SPENT ALL THOSE YEARS TOGETHER, AND WASTED THEM ALL.


WHAT ...?
HOW DARE YOU...


DON'T.
ZRSHH

YOU'VE GOT BROKEN RIBS. YOU'RE IN WORSE SHAPE THAN YOU REALIZE, BOY.
IF YOU TRY TO KEEP FIGHTING IN THE SAME WAY, YOU WILL LOSE.

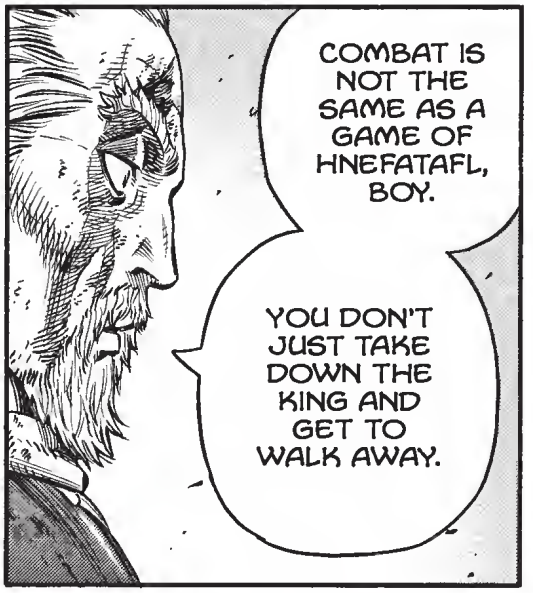

LET GO!
OR I'LL KILL YOU FIRST.

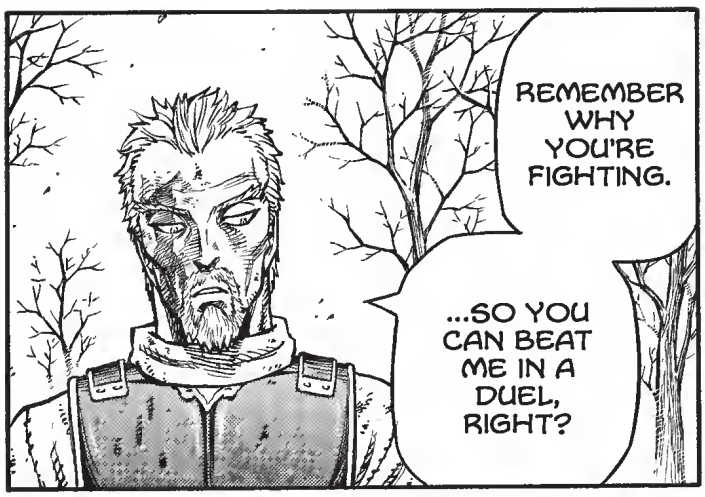
ZWIP
SWISH
HRR
THERE, SEE?
GAHK...
HNG... UGH...
THE OUTCOME OF YOUR BATTLE DETERMINES WHETHER I LIVE OR DIE.
SO LISTEN TO ME.
SHR
RK

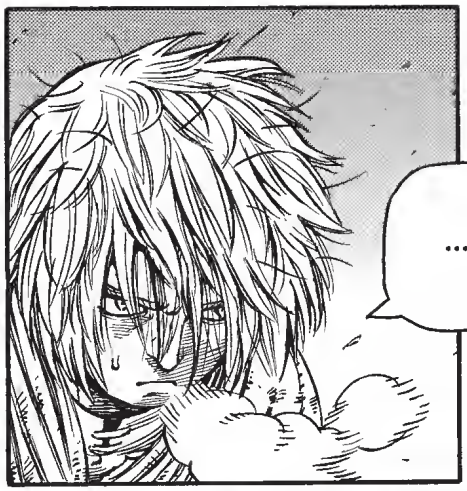
AND I'LL TELL YOU EXACTLY HOW TO BEAT THAT MONSTER.

IF YOU KNOW HOW TO STOP THORKELL, WHY DON'T YOU FIGHT HIM YOURSELF?!
...I'M NOT INTERESTED IN YOUR BULLSHIT, POINTY-HAIR!

HE TOLD YOU THAT HE'D LET US GO IF YOU MANAGE TO WIN.
BUT THIS CASE IS SPECIAL.
THE MONSTER VALUES HIS WARRIOR'S PRIDE. I DON'T SEE HIM BREAKING HIS VOW.


COMBAT IS NOT THE SAME AS A GAME OF HNEFATAFL, BOY.
YOU DON'T JUST TAKE DOWN THE KING AND GET TO WALK AWAY.

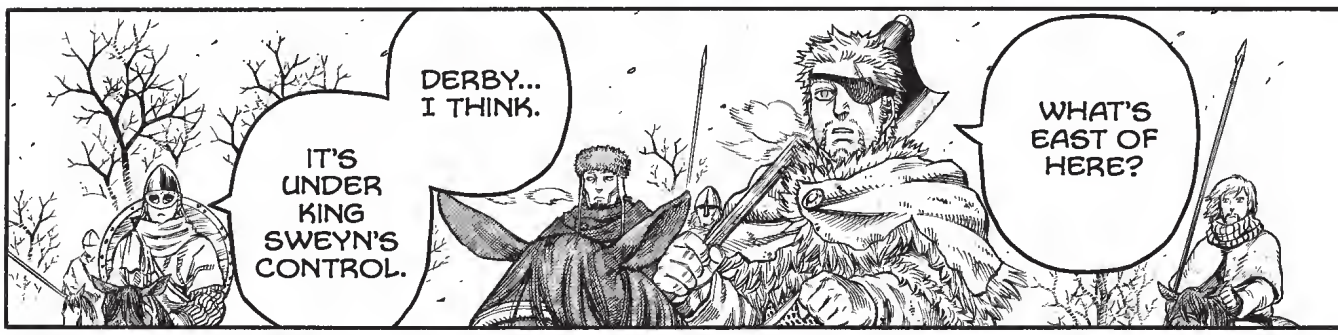


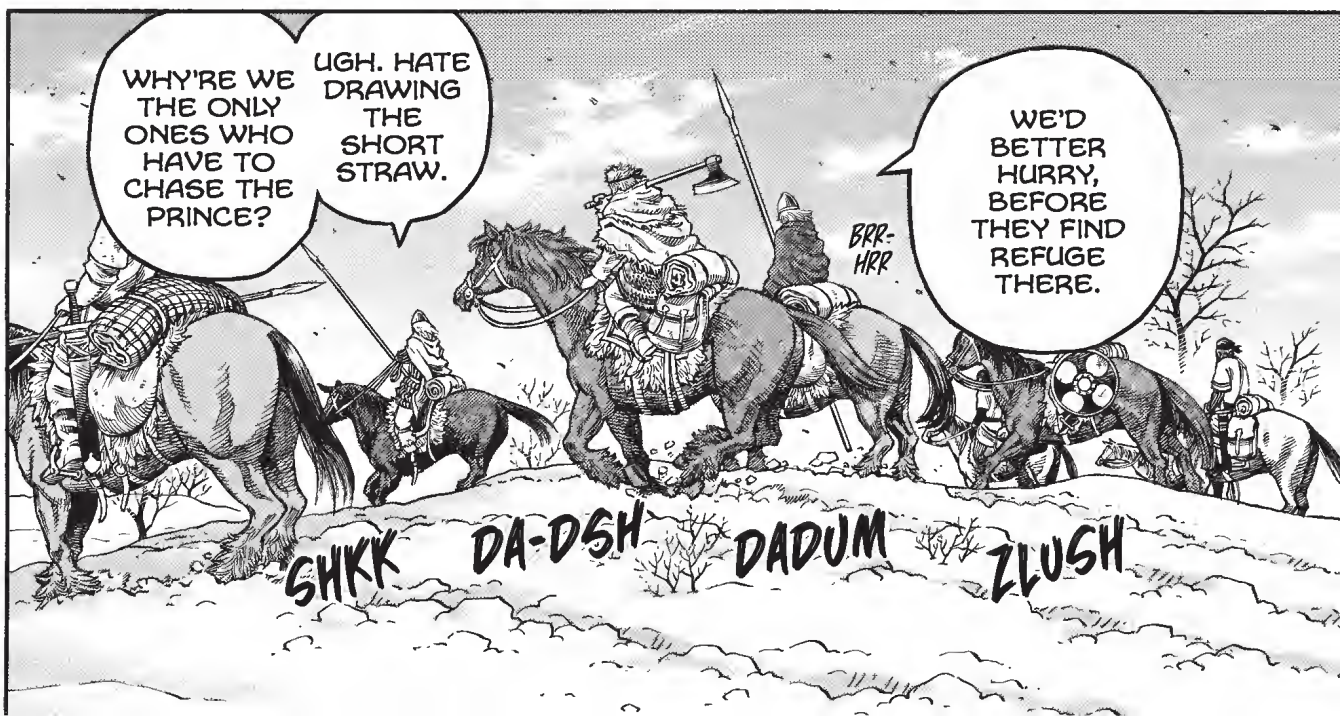


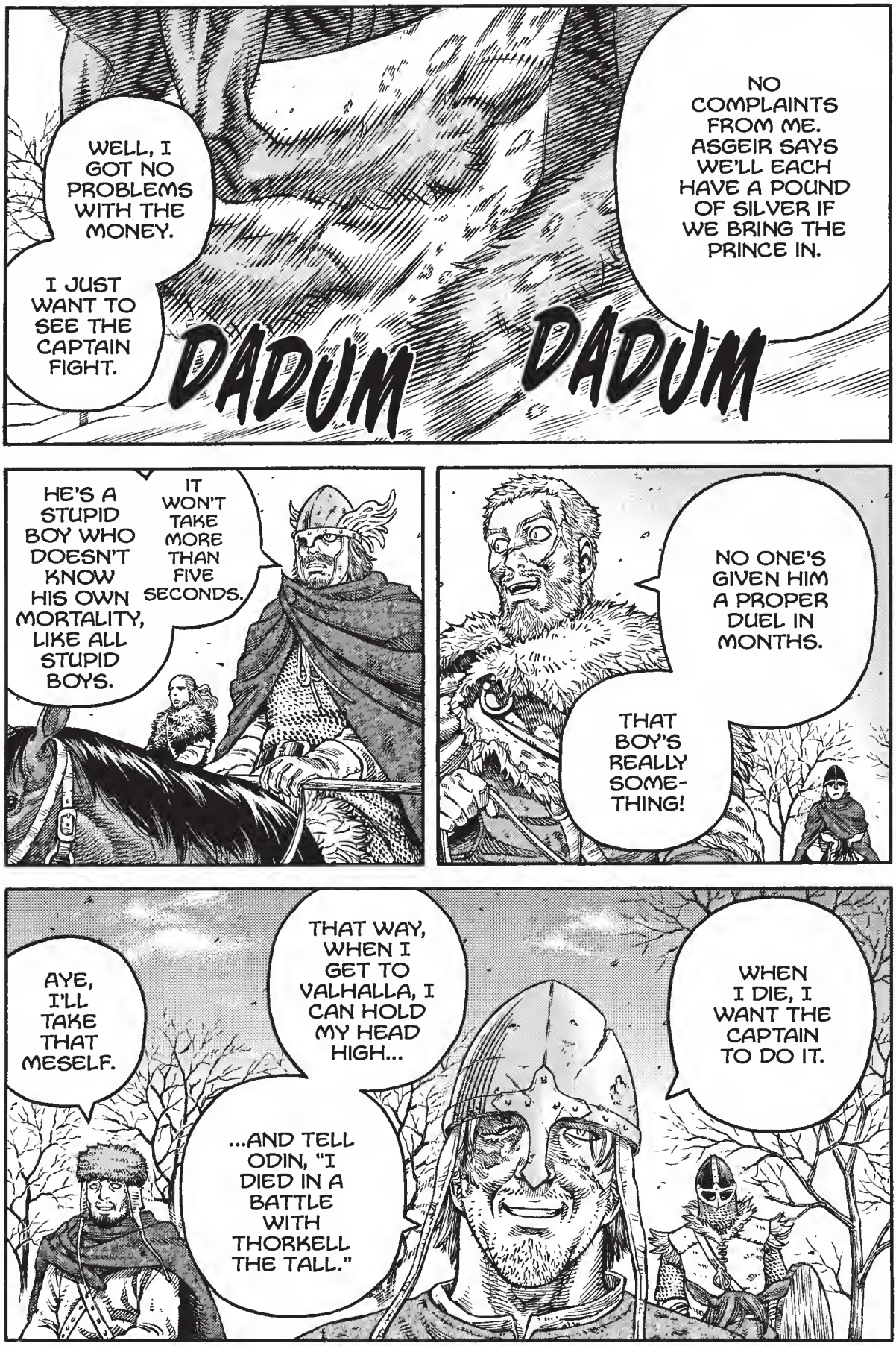
CHAPTER 40 - END

CHAPTER 41: UNITED FRONT

STRAIGHT TO THE EAST.

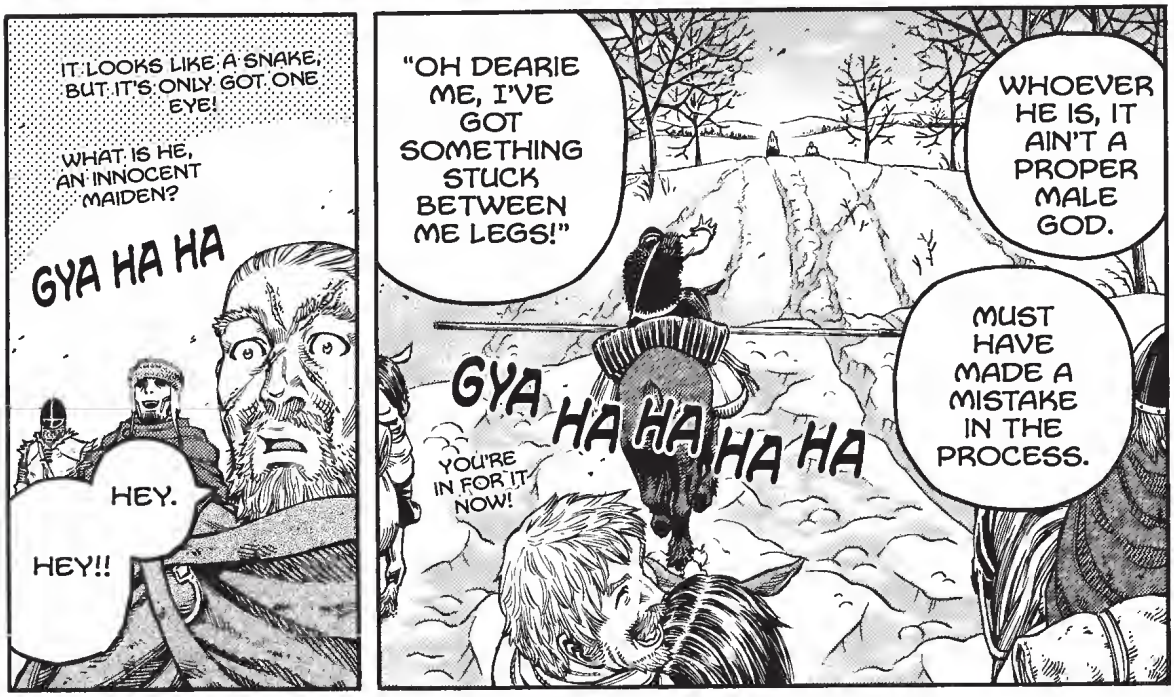

WHAT'S EAST OF HERE?
DERBY... I THINK.
IT'S UNDER KING SWEYN'S CONTROL.


WE'D BETTER HURRY, BEFORE THEY FIND REFUGE THERE.
BRR-HRR
UGH. HATE DRAWING THE SHORT STRAW.
WHY'RE WE THE ONLY ONES WHO HAVE TO CHASE THE PRINCE?
SHKK
DA-DSH
DADUM
ZLUSH

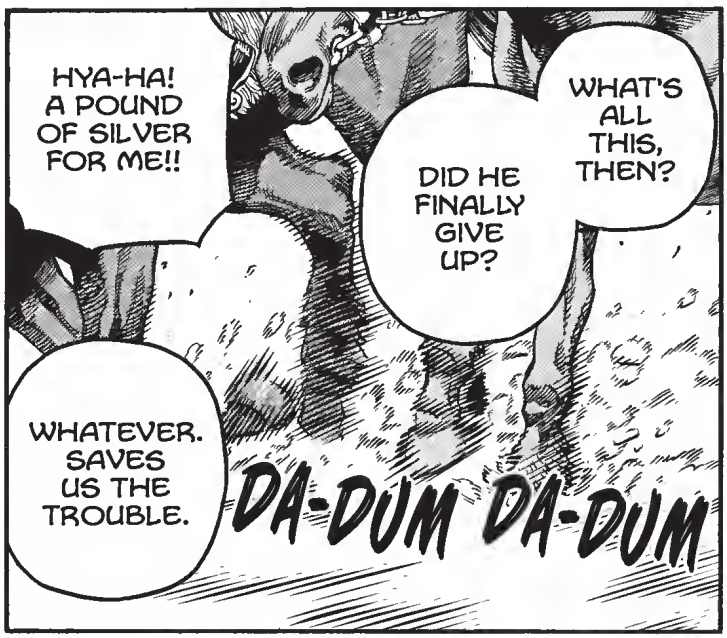

WELL, I GOT NO PROBLEMS WITH THE MONEY.
I JUST WANT TO SEE THE CAPTAIN FIGHT.
DADUM DADUM
NO COMPLAINTS FROM ME. ASGEIR SAYS WE'LL EACH HAVE A POUND OF SILVER IF WE BRING THE PRINCE IN.
HE'S A STUPID BOY WHO DOESN'T KNOW HIS OWN MORTALITY, LIKE ALL STUPID BOYS.
IT WON'T TAKE MORE THAN FIVE SECONDS.
NO ONE'S GIVEN HIM A PROPER DUEL IN MONTHS.
THAT BOY'S REALLY SOME-THING!
AYE, I'LL TAKE THAT MESELF.
THAT WAY, WHEN I GET TO VALHALLA, I CAN HOLD MY HEAD HIGH...
...AND TELL ODIN, "I DIED IN A BATTLE WITH THORKELL THE TALL."
WHEN I DIE, I WANT THE CAPTAIN TO DO IT.

HE'S JUST MADE OF DIFFERENT STUFF FROM THE REST OF US.
Y'KNOW HOW THEY SAY THE AESIR SOMETIMES TAKE THE FORM OF MEN AND WALK AMONG US DOWN ON MIDGARD?
WELL, MY MONEY'S ON HIM BEIN' AN INCARNATION OF THOR.

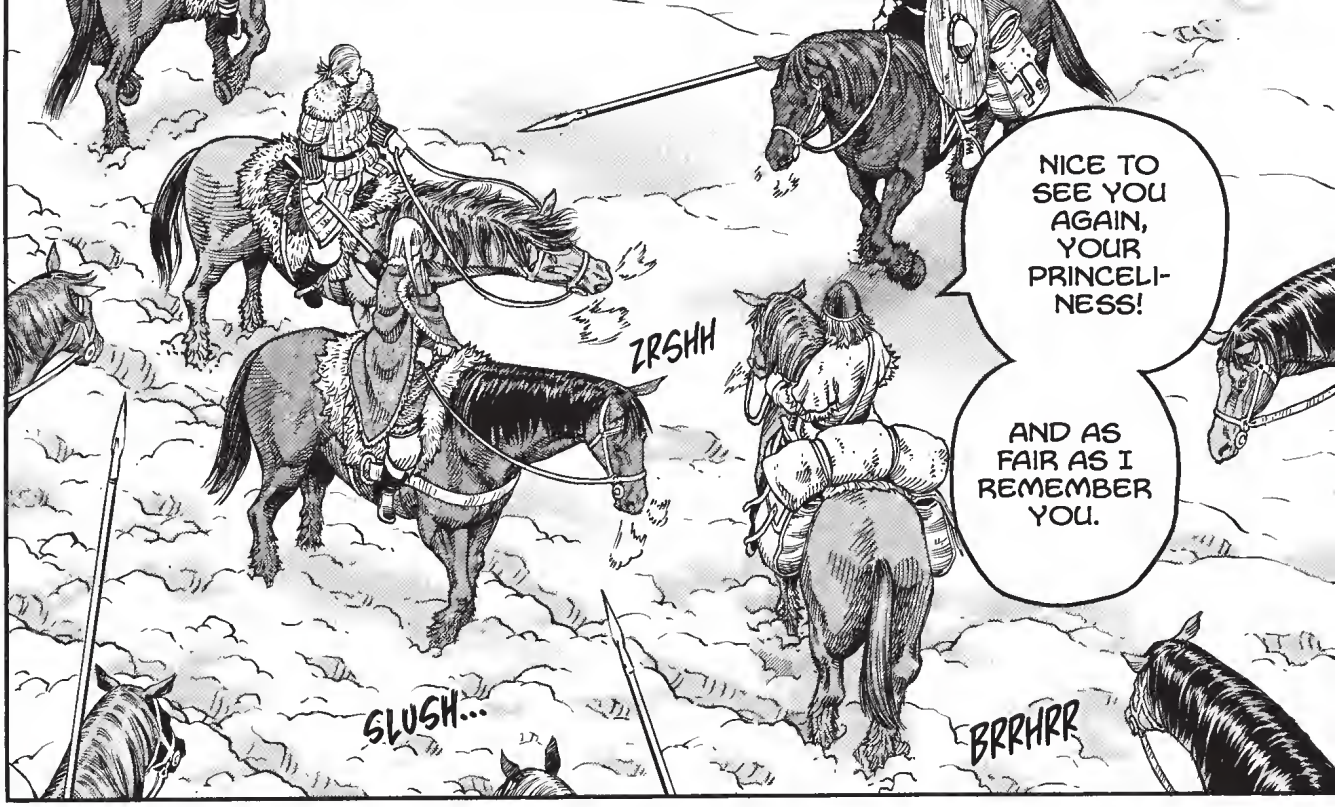
BWA HA HA HA HA
HAH! IF HE'S THOR, WHAT DOES THAT MAKE PRINCE CANUTE? FREYA?
IT'S PERFECT!
A GODDESS ?!


IT LOOKS LIKE A SNAKE, BUT IT'S ONLY GOT ONE EYE!
WHAT IS HE, AN INNOCENT MAIDEN?
GYA HA HA
HEY.
HEY!!
"OH DEARIE ME, I'VE GOT SOMETHING STUCK BETWEEN ME LEGS!"
WHOEVER HE IS, IT AIN'T A PROPER MALE GOD.
MUST HAVE MADE A MISTAKE IN THE PROCESS.
GYA HA HA HA HA
YOU'RE IN FOR IT NOW!

COMING THIS WAY.
IF IT AIN'T FREYA HERSELF!
...OH?

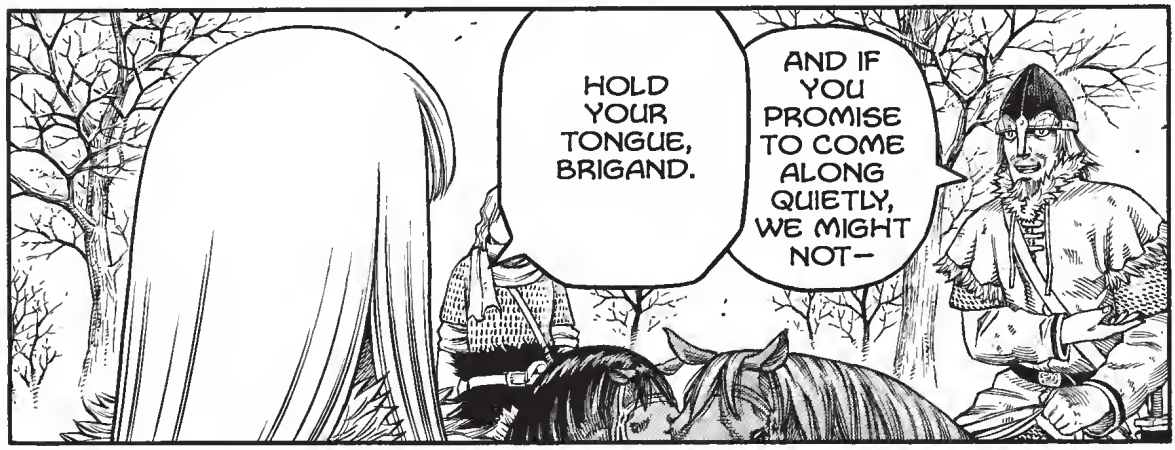

HYA-HA! A POUND OF SILVER FOR ME!!
DID HE FINALLY GIVE UP?
WHAT'S ALL THIS, THEN?
WHATEVER. SAVES US THE TROUBLE.
DA-DUM DA-DUM

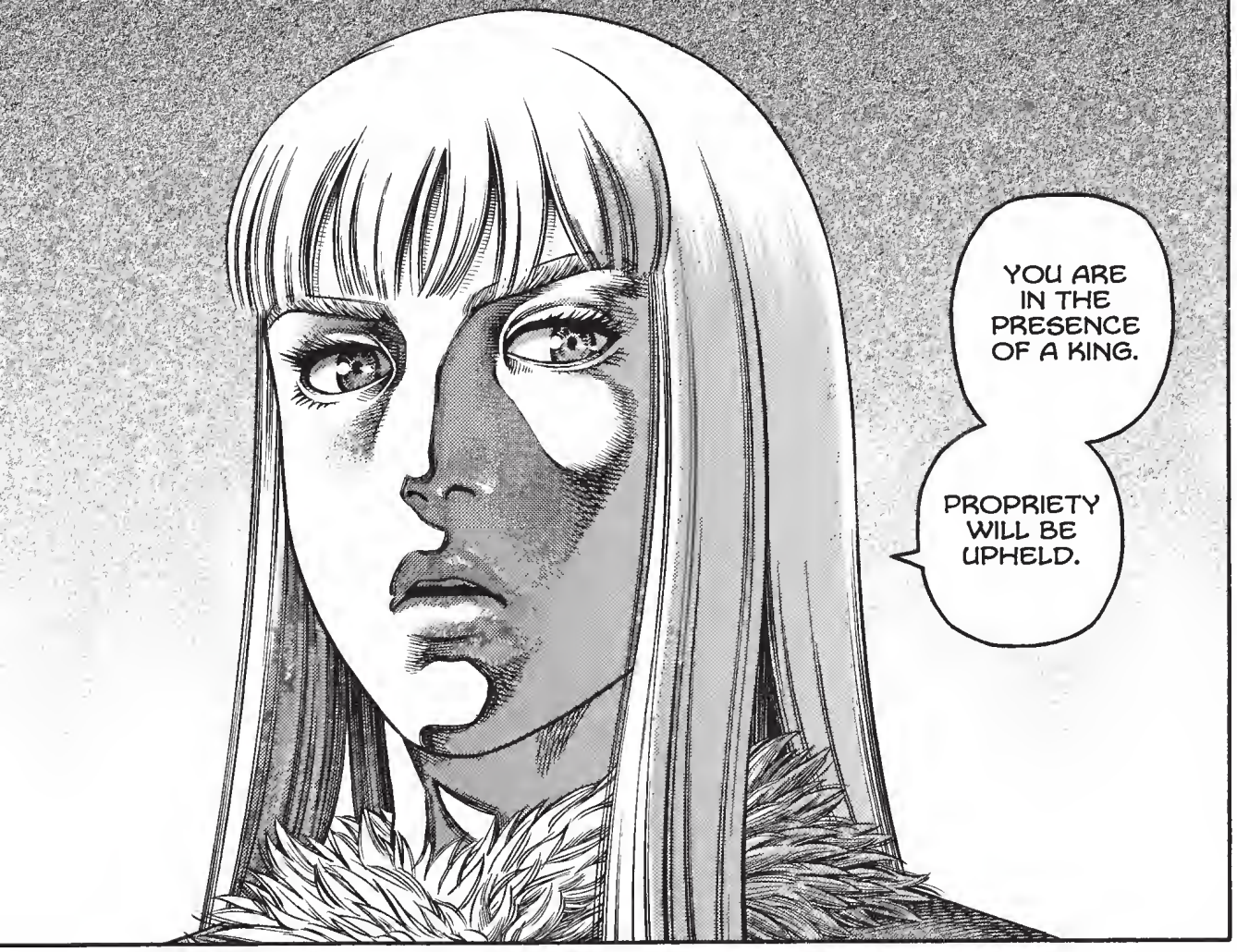
??
?

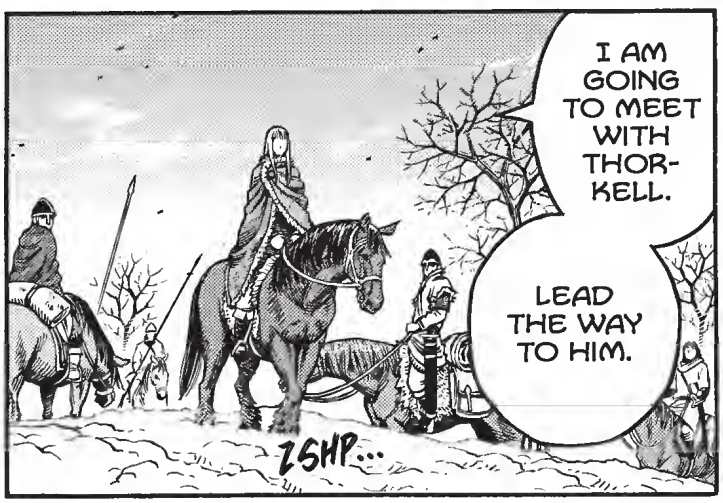

NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN, YOUR PRINCELI-NESS!
AND AS FAIR AS I REMEMBER YOU.
ZRSHH
SLUSH...
BRRHRR

HEH HEH...
HA HA HA...

WE'RE HERE TO KEEP YOU COMPANY.
YOU MUST BE LONELY ALL BY YOUR NOBLE SELF.


HOLD YOUR TONGUE, BRIGAND.
AND IF YOU PROMISE TO COME ALONG QUIETLY, WE MIGHT NOT—

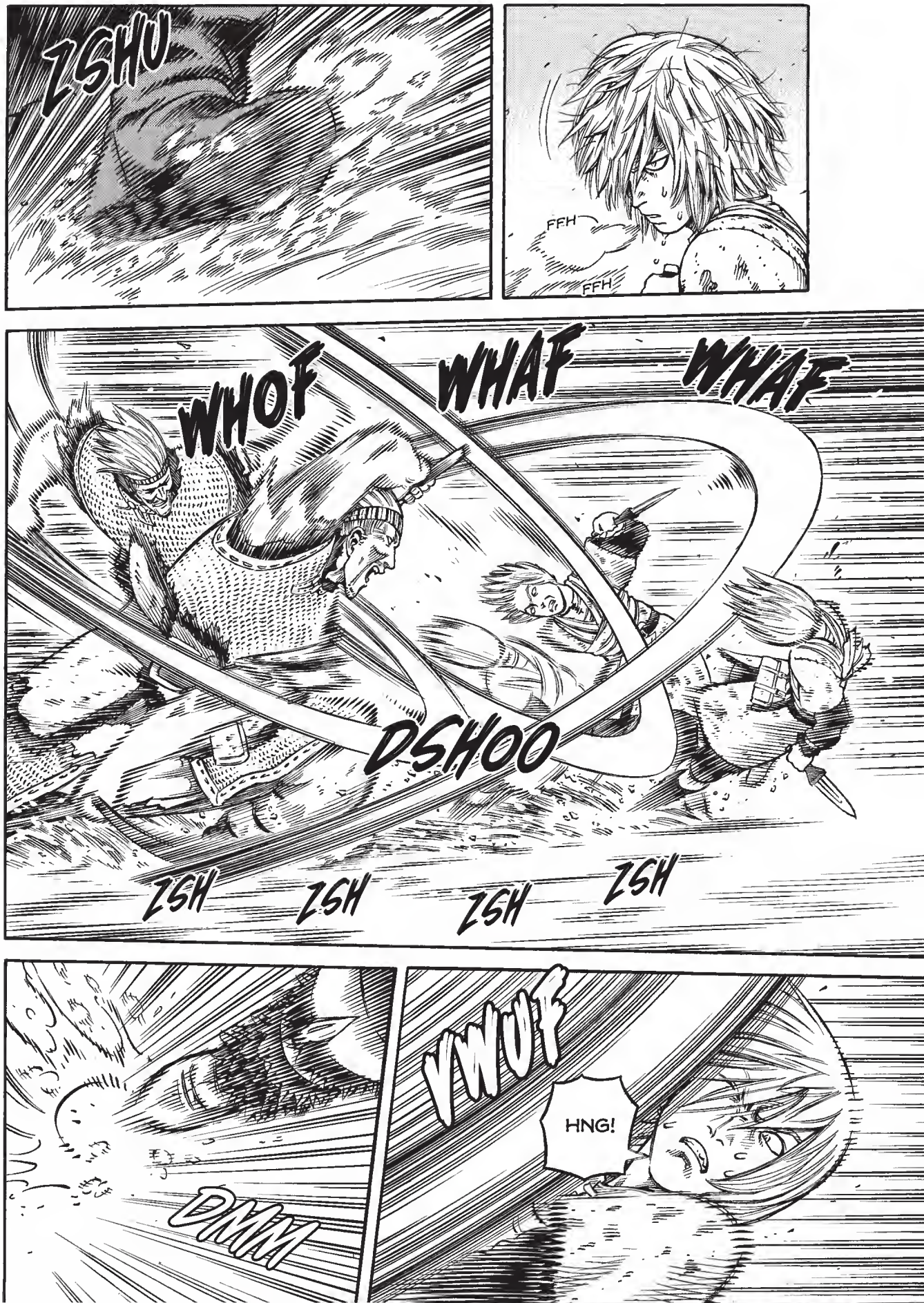

YOU ARE IN THE PRESENCE OF A KING.
PROPRIETY WILL BE UPHELD.


I AM GOING TO MEET WITH THOR-KELL.
LEAD THE WAY TO HIM.
ZSHP...

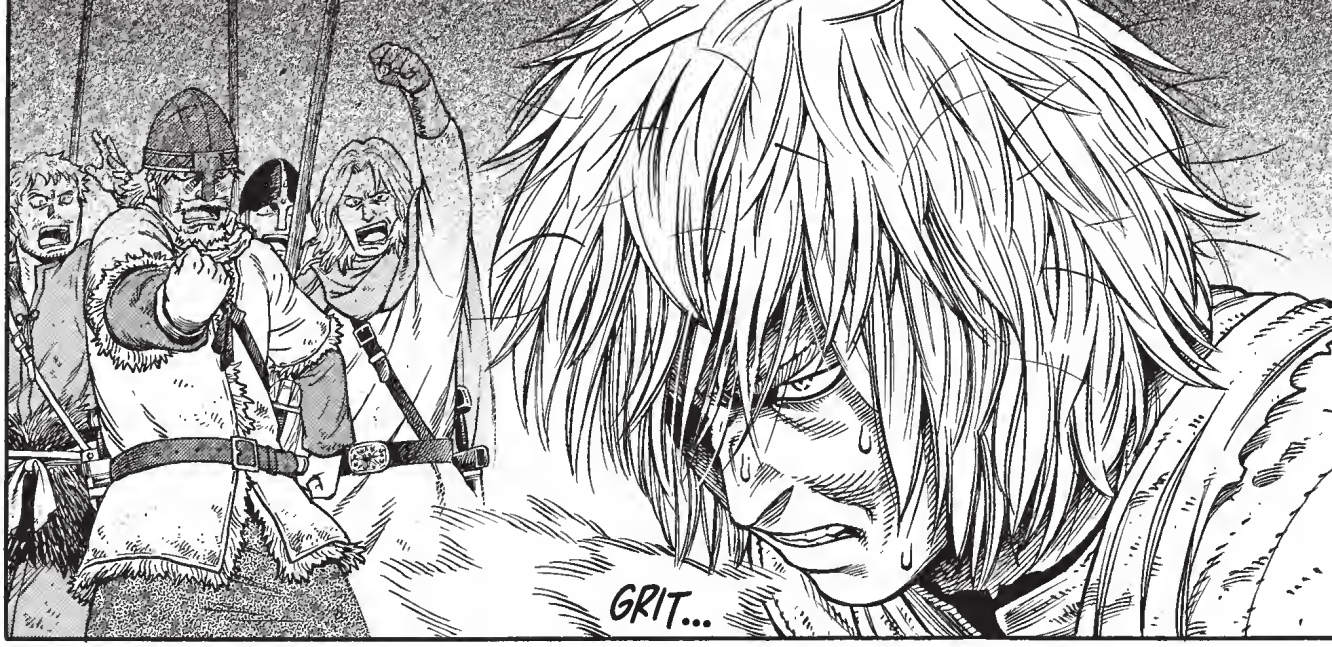
IS THAT... THE SAME PRINCE...?
...
HUH?

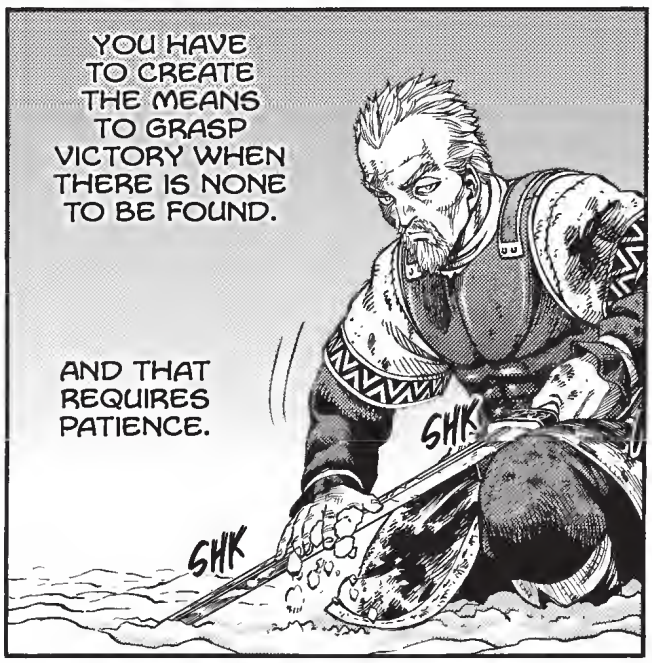
RYAAH
!!
KSHA
KK

RAAHHHH
RUN!
WHOA!
HYEEK!
ZZSH
DOES IT HURT, THORFINN?
HFF
HFF
HFF
YOUR MOVE-MENTS AREN'T SO SHARP ANY-MORE
ARE YOU GOING TO SURRENDER, AND LOSE YOUR CHANCE AT ASKELADD FOREVER? HMM?

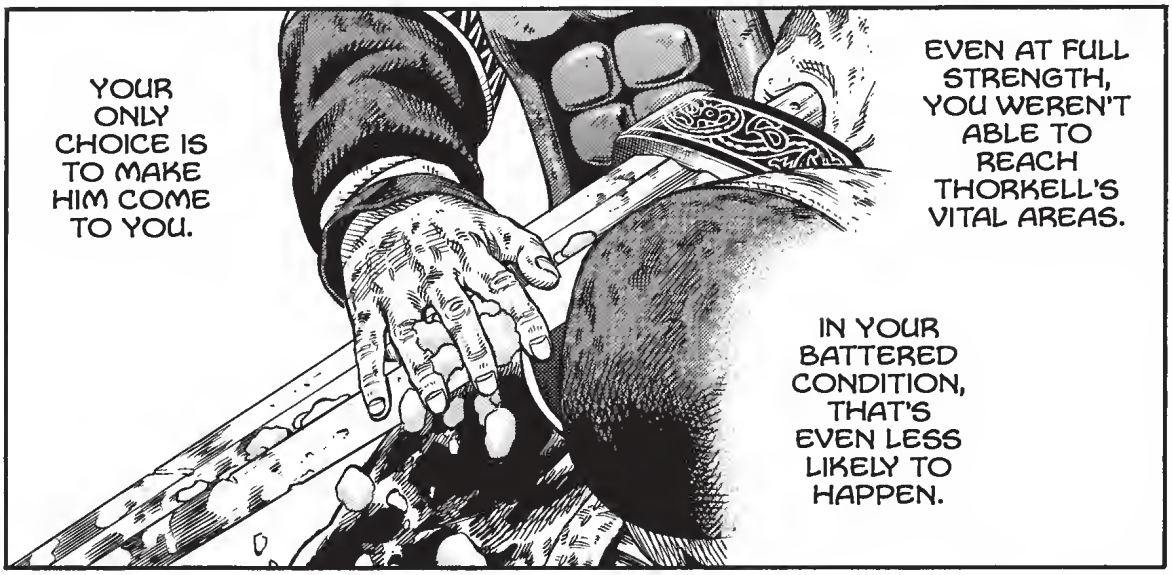

ZSHU
FFH
FFH
WHOF
WHAF
WHAF
DSHOO
ZSH
ZSH
ZSH
ZSH
DMM
YWUF
HNG!

DSAH
DWAAH ?!
NO USE TRYING TO ESCAPE, YOU LITTLE COWARD!
STAND AND FACE YOUR FATE LIKE A MAN!!
BOOO
YOU IDIOT!
BOOO
HEY! QUIT PLAYING AROUND !!
JUST GIVE UP AND DIE ALREADY!
BOOO
FIGHT WITH PRIDE UNTIL THE END, THORFINN!!
ARE YOU TRYING TO TARNISH THORS' NAME?!
WHAT WAS THAT NON-SENSE ABOUT ?!

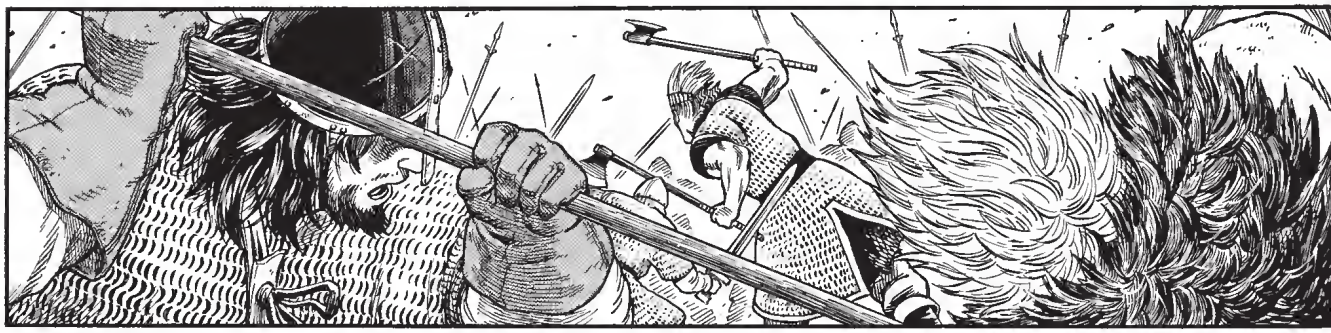

GRIT...

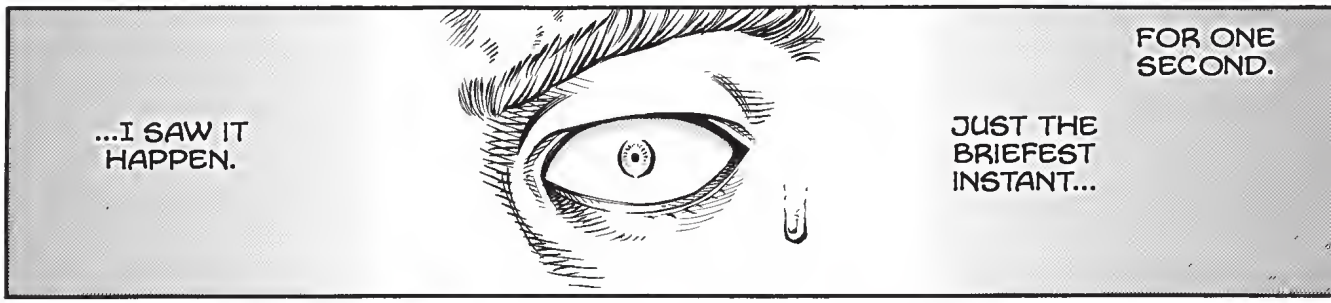

YOU HAVE TO CREATE THE MEANS TO GRASP VICTORY WHEN THERE IS NONE TO BE FOUND.
AND THAT REQUIRES PATIENCE.
SHK
SHK

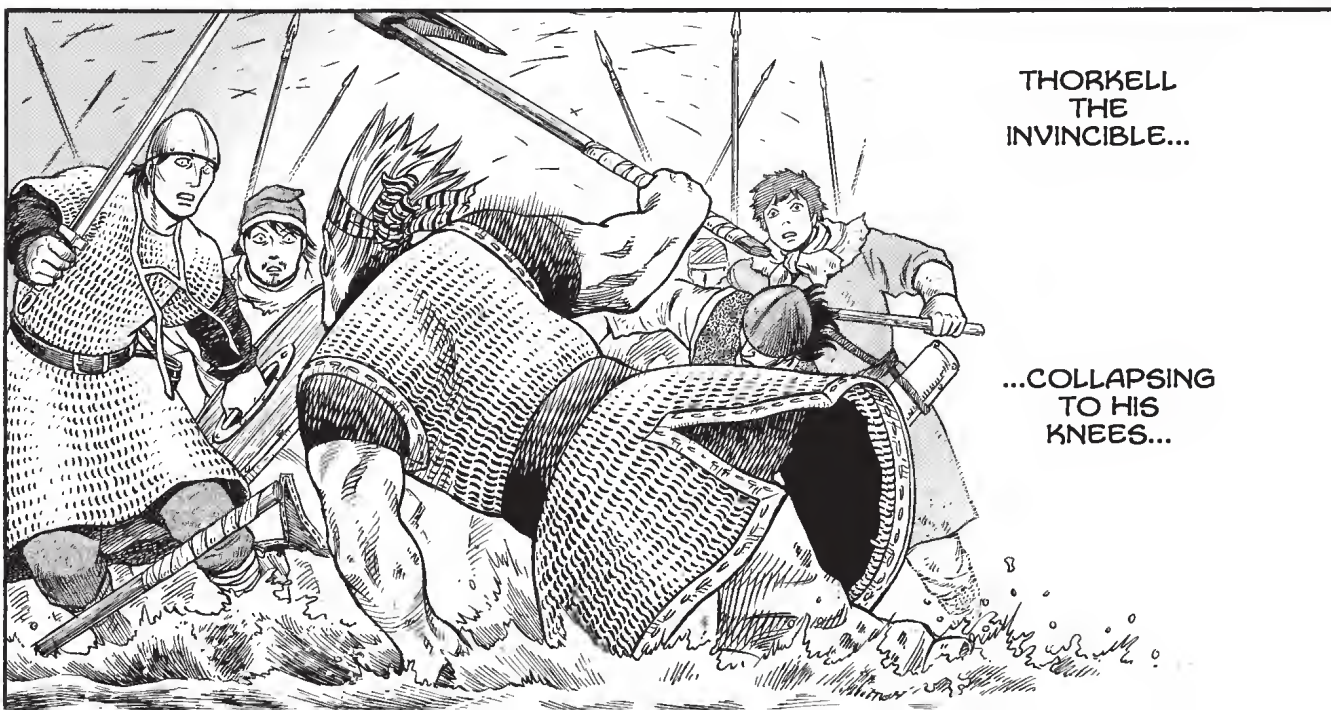
DON'T LET THEM GET TO YOU.
HOLD IT IN FOR NOW, THORFINN.


YOUR ONLY CHOICE IS TO MAKE HIM COME TO YOU.
EVEN AT FULL STRENGTH, YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO REACH THORKELL'S VITAL AREAS.
IN YOUR BATTERED CONDITION, THAT'S EVEN LESS LIKELY TO HAPPEN.

RAAHH
GLINT
...
WAS IT THE BATTLE OF MALDON?
THAT WAS A FIERCE AND BLOODY CLASH.
HE NEARLY MAIMED THORKELL, FOR ONE THING.
BYRHTNOTH WAS A DEADLY FOE.




...I SAW IT HAPPEN.
JUST THE BRIEFEST INSTANT...
FOR ONE SECOND.


THORKELL THE INVINCIBLE...
...COLLAPSING TO HIS KNEES...

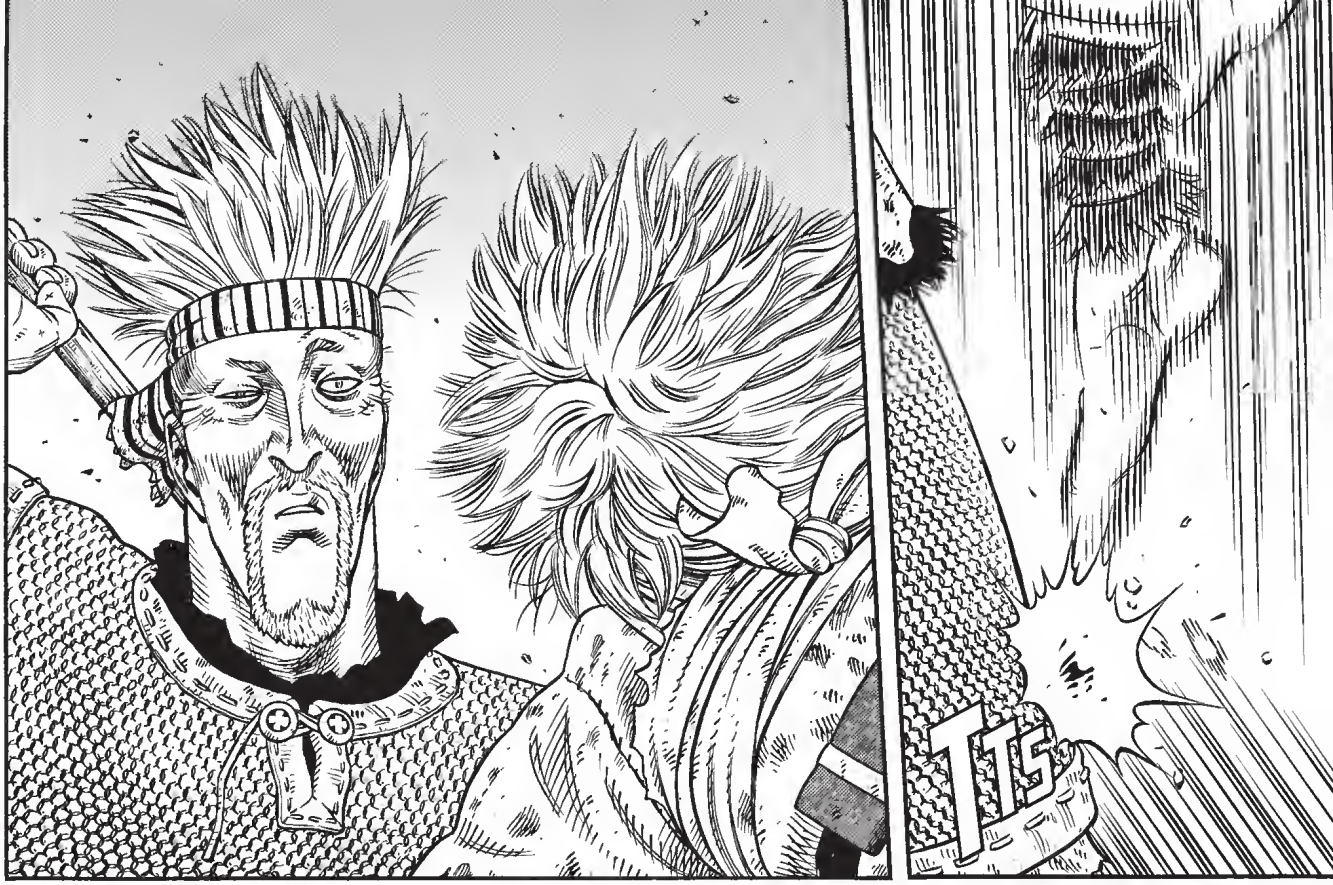
GLING
KAK
YOU NEED HIM TO THINK YOU'RE OUT OF IDEAS.
THORKELL WON'T LET HIS GUARD DOWN AS LONG AS HE SEES THOSE BLADES IN YOUR HANDS.
WELL DONE.
THAT'S GOOD.

WHAT'S WRONG, THORFINN?
TIRED OF RUNNING?
FFH
FFH
HFF
THORS MUST BE CRYING IN VALHALLA.
I WAS EXPECTING YOU TO SHOW ME A BIT MORE BACKBONE.
THIS IS A DIS-APPOINT-MENT.

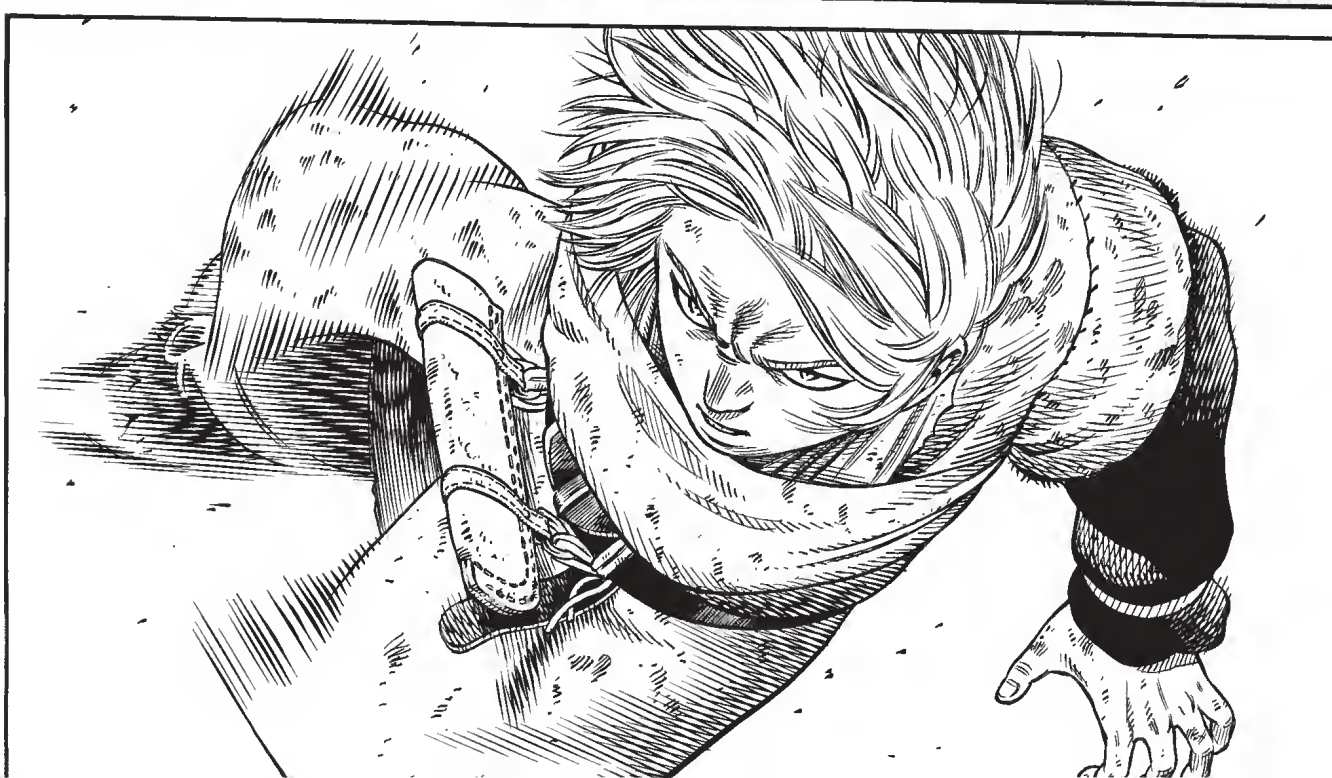
YOU'RE DOING WELL, THORFINN.
GOOD POSITIONING.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR ALL THE JUMPING AND SCUTTLING AROUND, MAYBE.
NOW, NOW. THE BOY'S DONE ADMIRABLY.
TGK
THE END ALWAYS COMES SWIFTLY.
THORFINN IS HELPLESS RIGHT NOW.
DELIVER THE KILLING BLOW.
THAT'S RIGHT, THORKELL.
MOVE IN CLOSE.
ZUSH

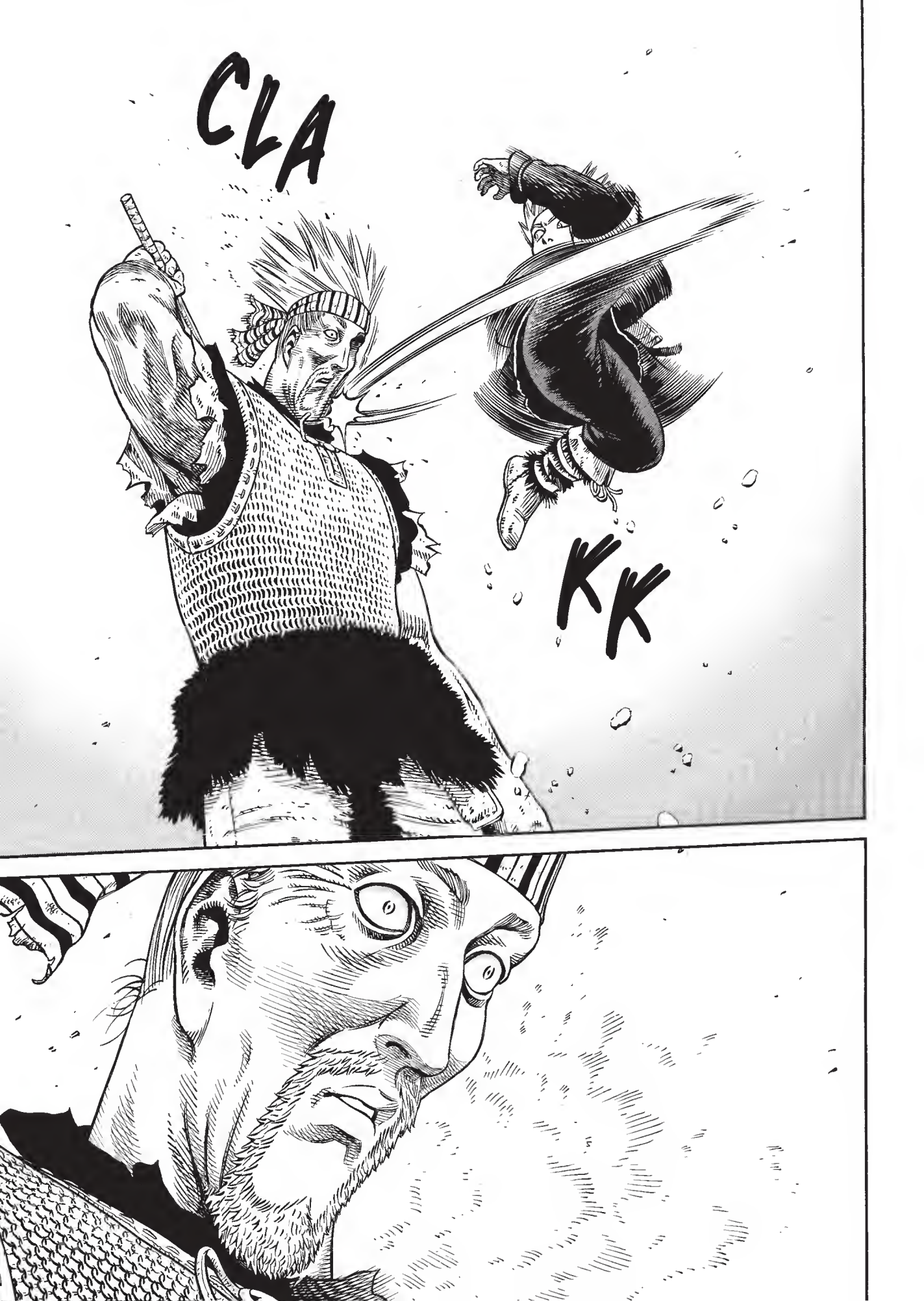
ZSH
ALL WE NEED...
...IS A SINGLE INSTANT.
KRK

FLASH
MM?


TTS

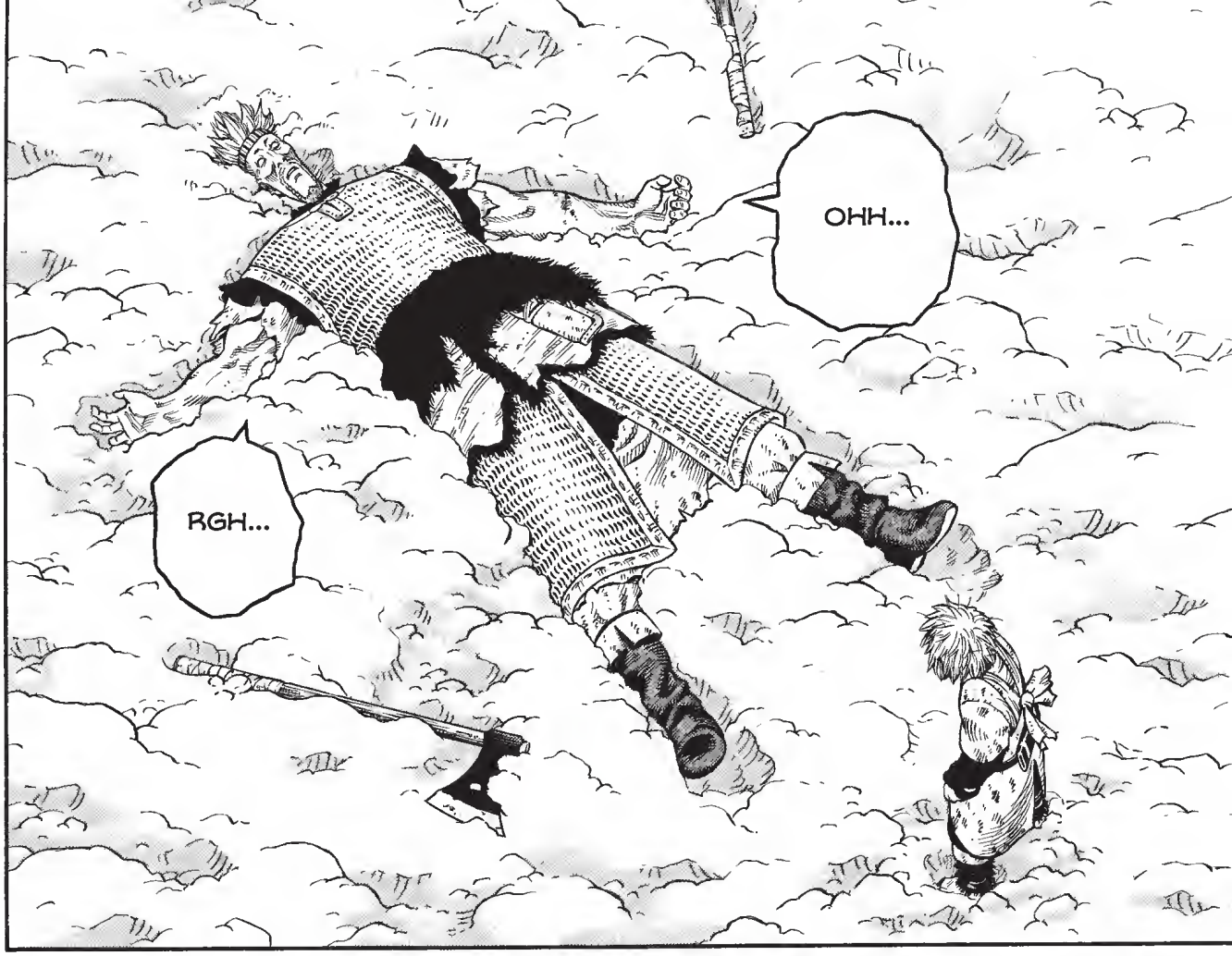
YES, I SAW IT.
I SAW HIS WEAKNESS...

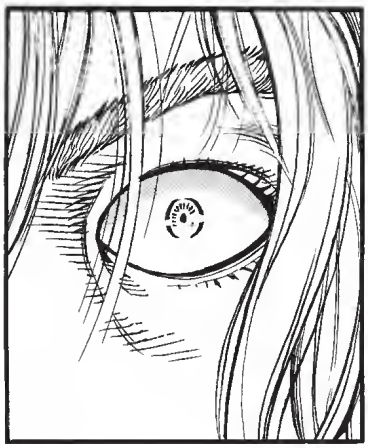


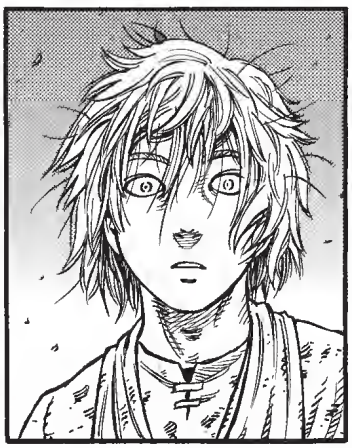

CLA
KK

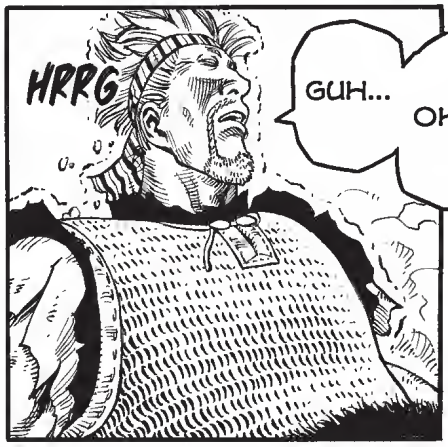
SHPP
HRRG!
THUDD

SHD
UMMM


OHH...
RGH...

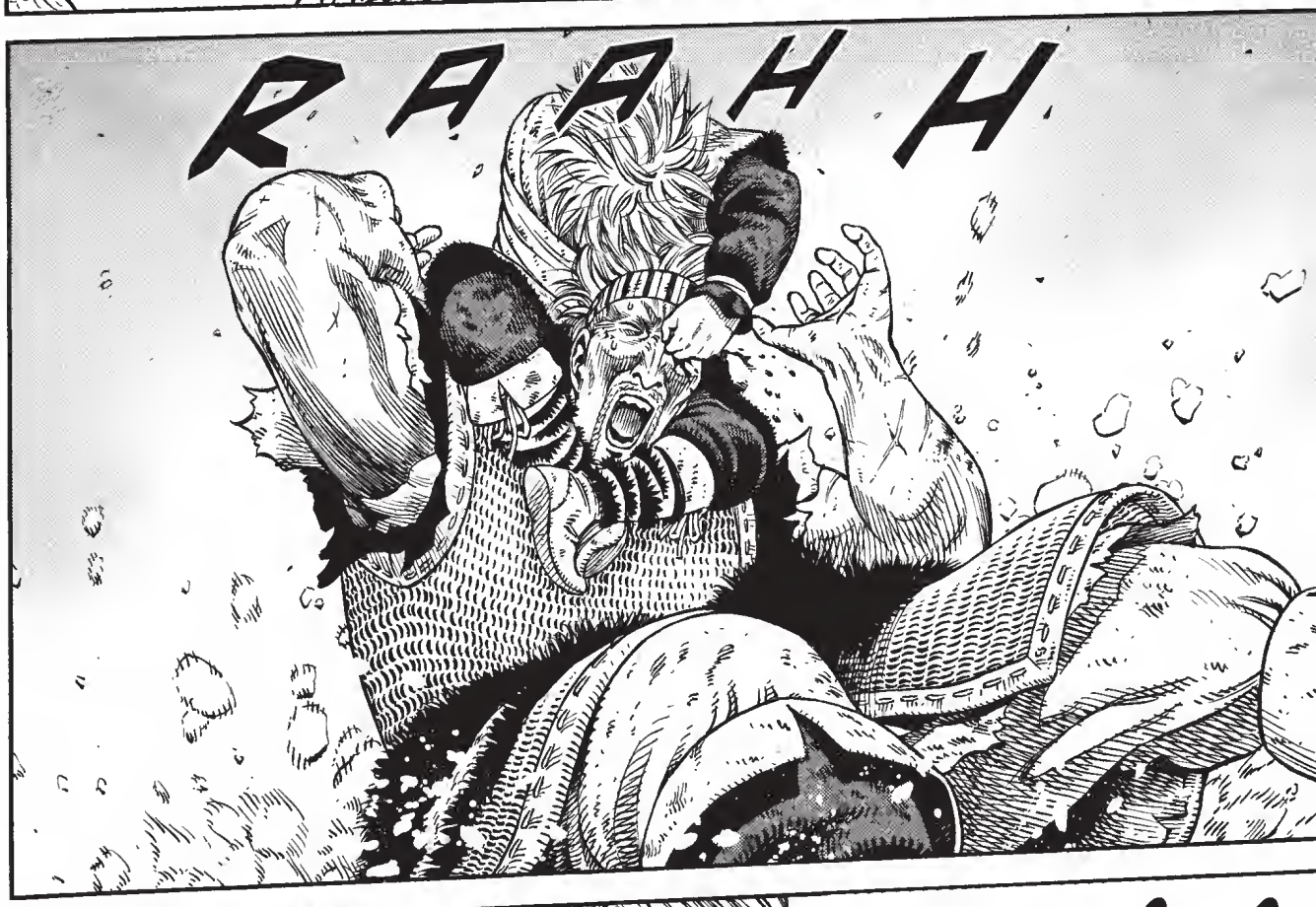


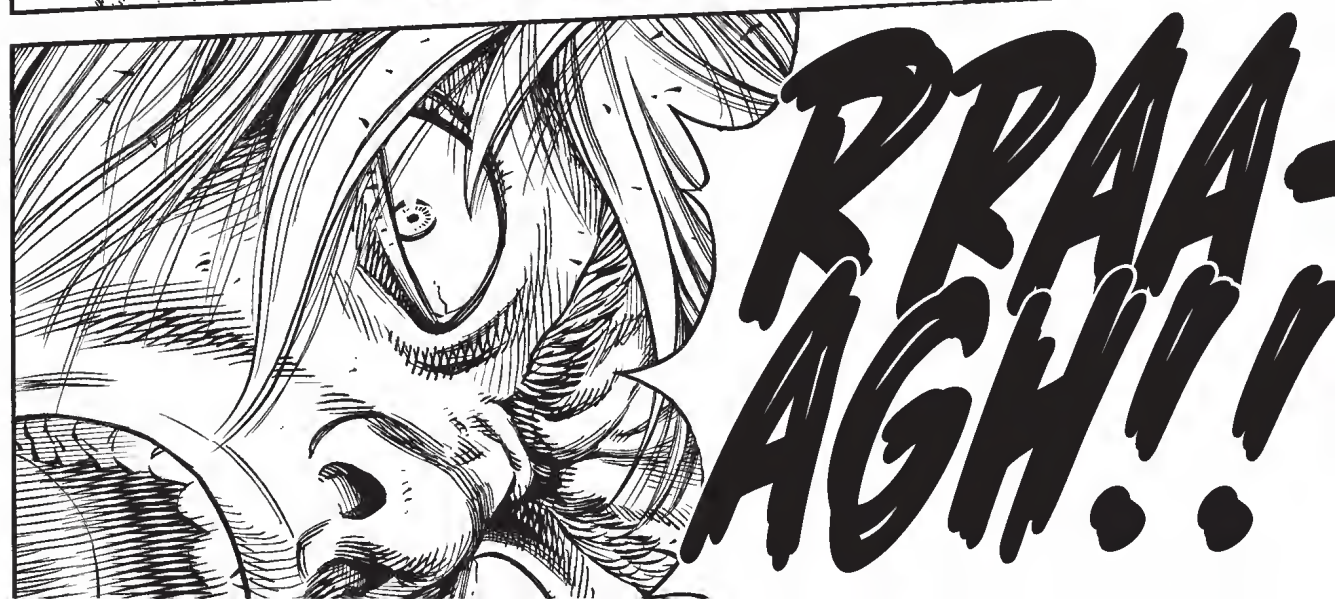



HRRG
GUH...
OHRR...

AAA
AAA

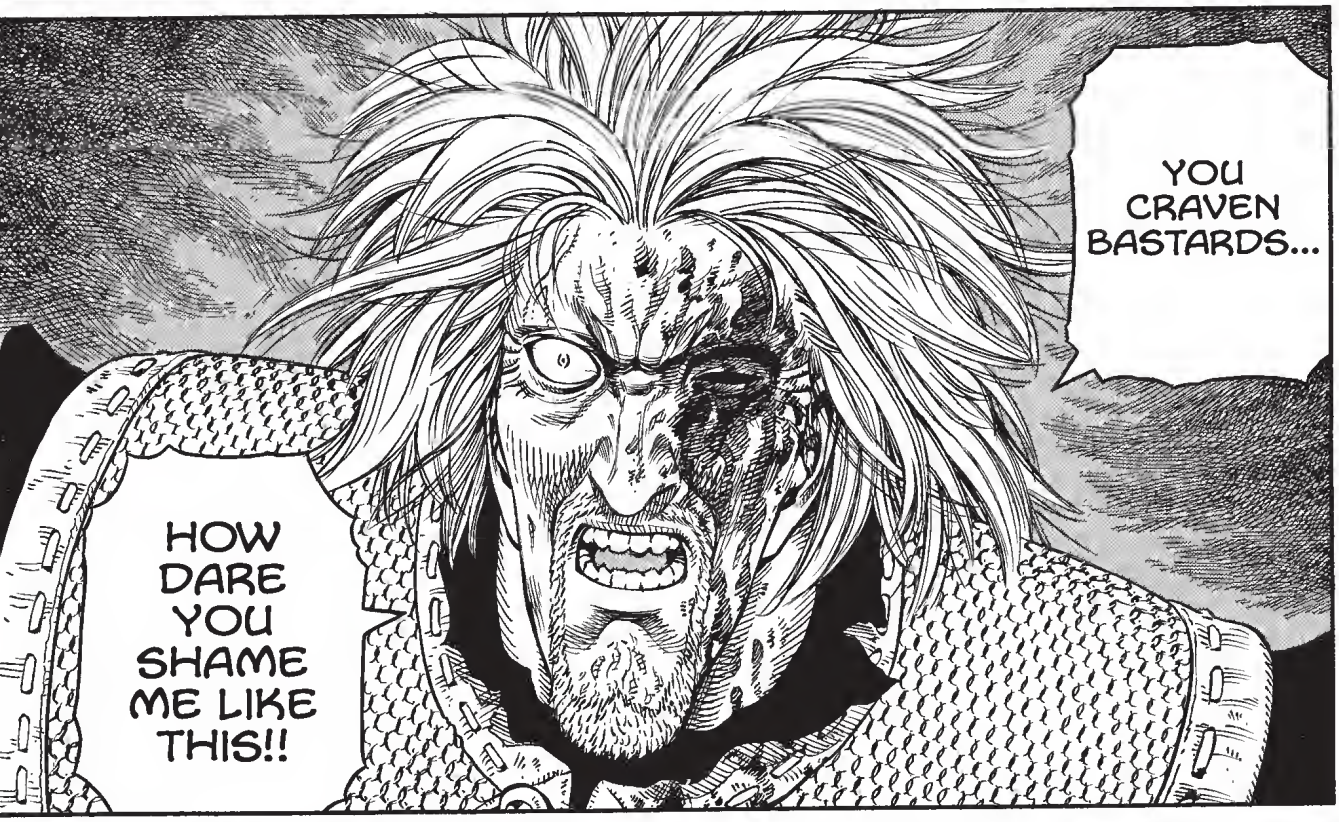
GRAAHHH
CAPTAIN !!

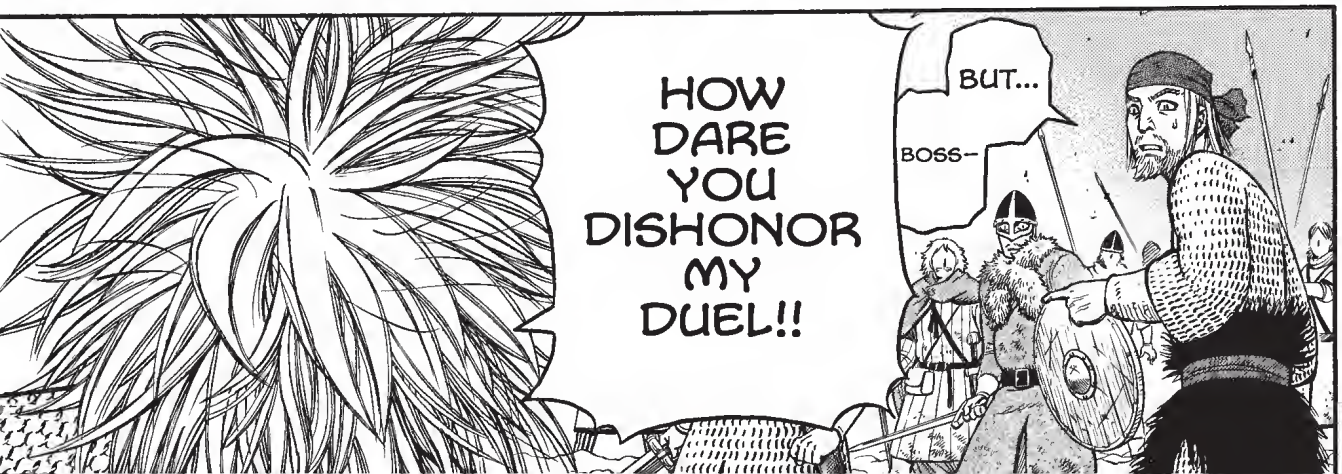

RAAHH

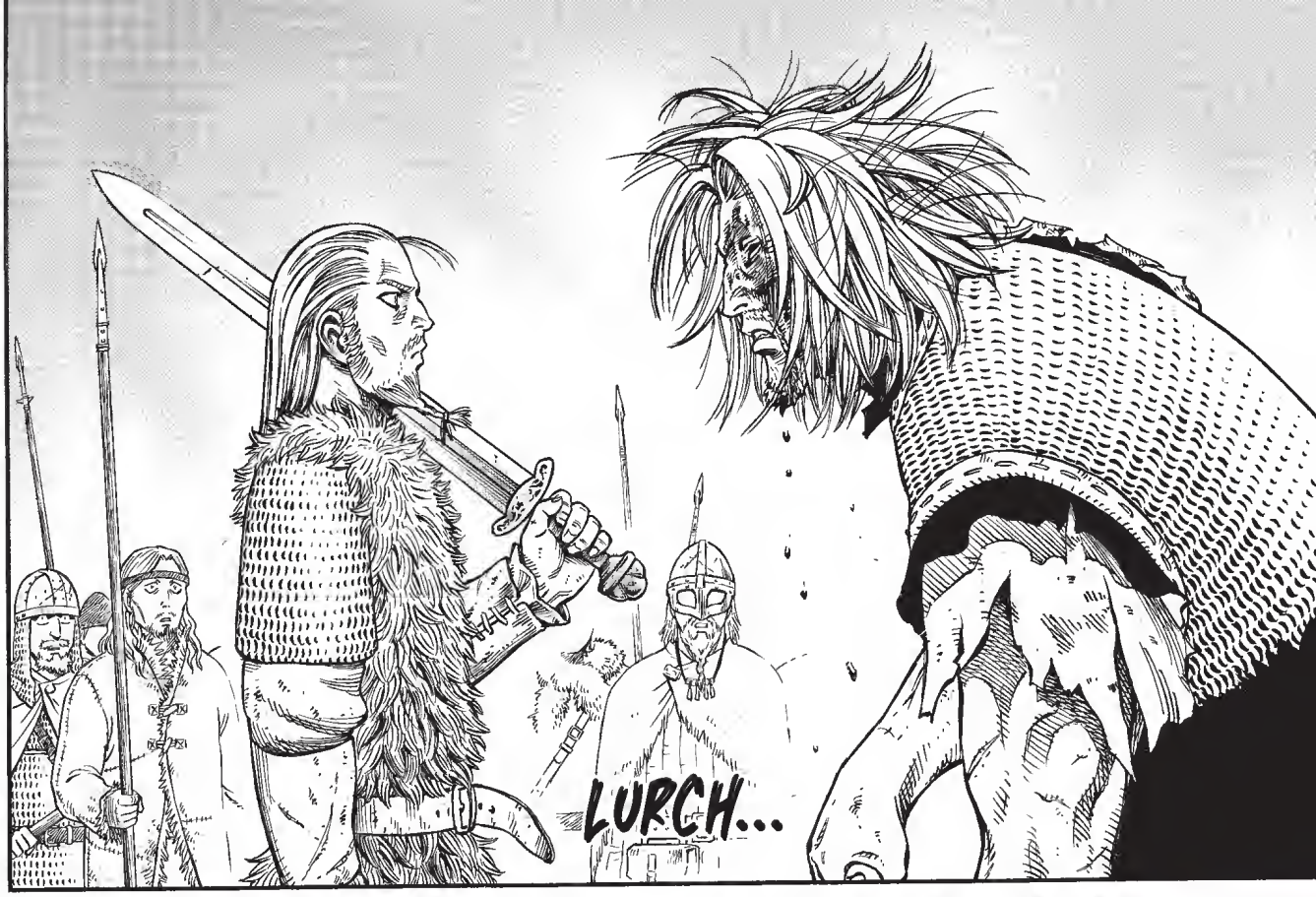

RRAA-AGH!!

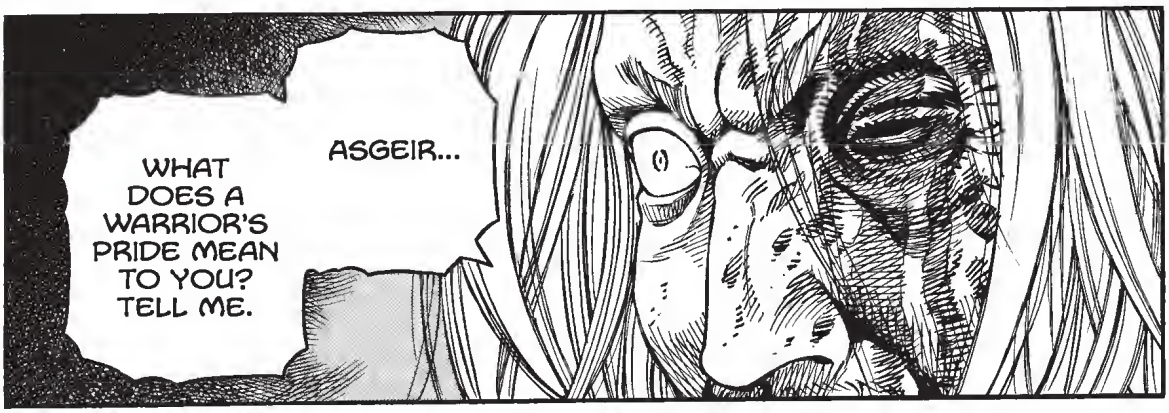
!!
WITHOUT YOUR WEAPON, TOO...
DAMN IT, IT'S YOUR OLD HABITS IN THE CLUTCH AGAIN!!
ZSHH
AH
TO YOUR RIGHT, THOR-FINN!!
SHKK
HRG!

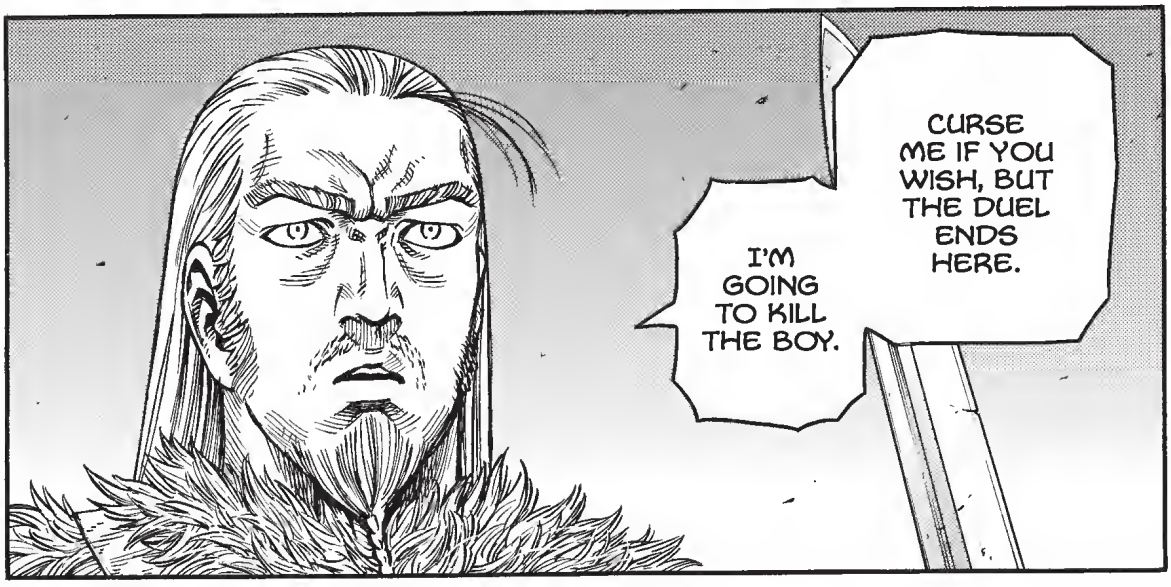
RAAHHH
KILL THE BOY!!
EVERY-ONE TOGETH-ER!!
FUCK!!
DIE, LAD!!
DMFF
STOP, YOU FOOLS!!


YOU CRAVEN BASTARDS...
HOW DARE YOU SHAME ME LIKE THIS!!


HOW DARE YOU DISHONOR MY DUEL!!
BUT...
BOSS-


LURCH...


ASGEIR...
WHAT DOES A WARRIOR'S PRIDE MEAN TO YOU? TELL ME.


CURSE ME IF YOU WISH, BUT THE DUEL ENDS HERE.
I'M GOING TO KILL THE BOY.

GSHK

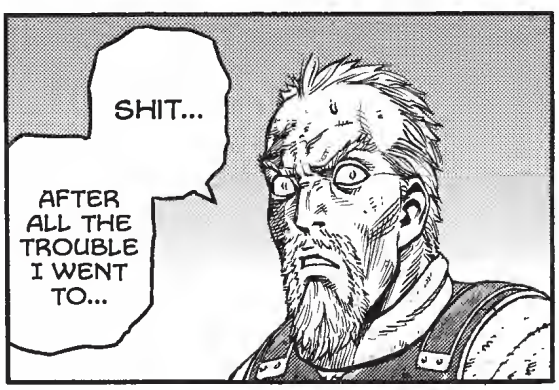
WHO ELSE AMONG US...
KILL ME IF YOU MUST, BUT YOU NEED TO LIVE!!

...CAN POSSIBLY LEAD THIS ARMY OF FIVE HUNDRED BEASTS?!

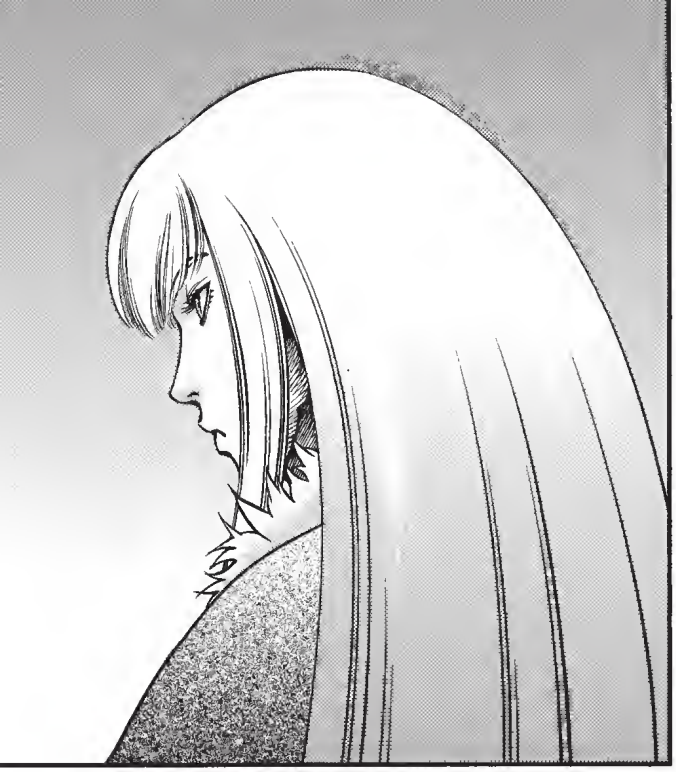
HAH!
THERE'S A SURPRISE.
WE'VE GOT A CHARACTER IN THORKELL'S MIDST, AFTER ALL.
...
KAH...

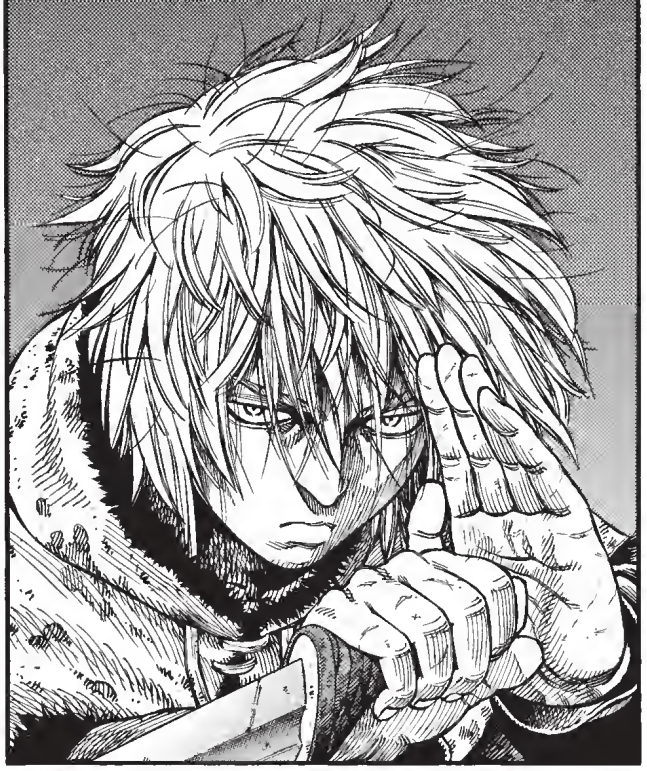
CALM YOURSELVES, WARRIORS.
THAT IS ENOUGH.

ZSH

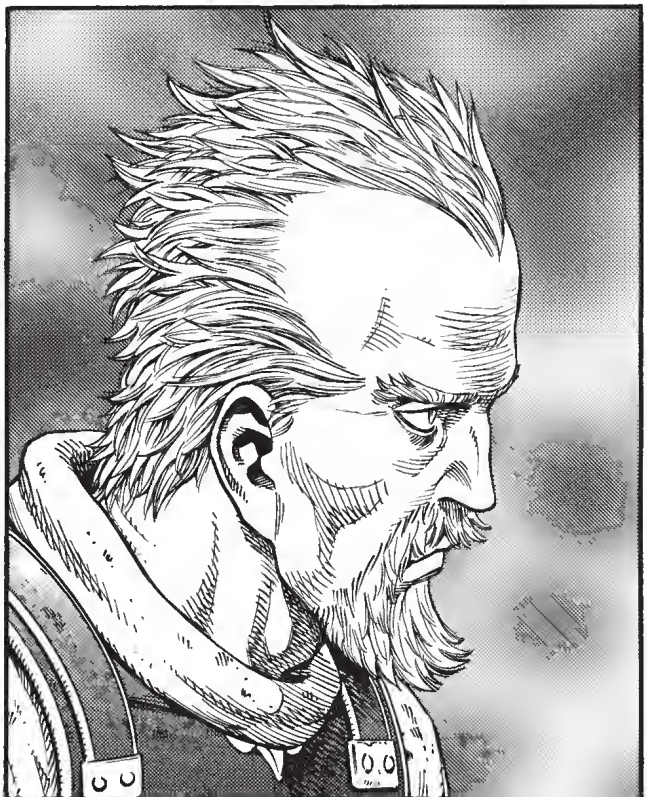

SHIT...
AFTER ALL THE TROUBLE I WENT TO...

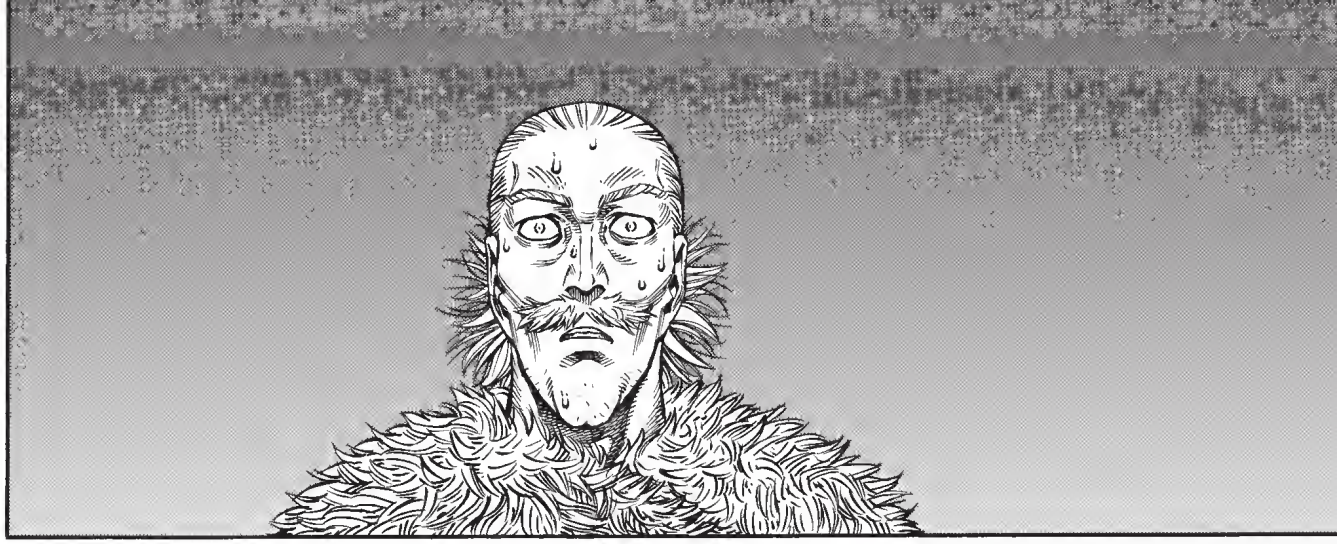
CHAPTER 41 - END





CHAPTER 42: VERDICT





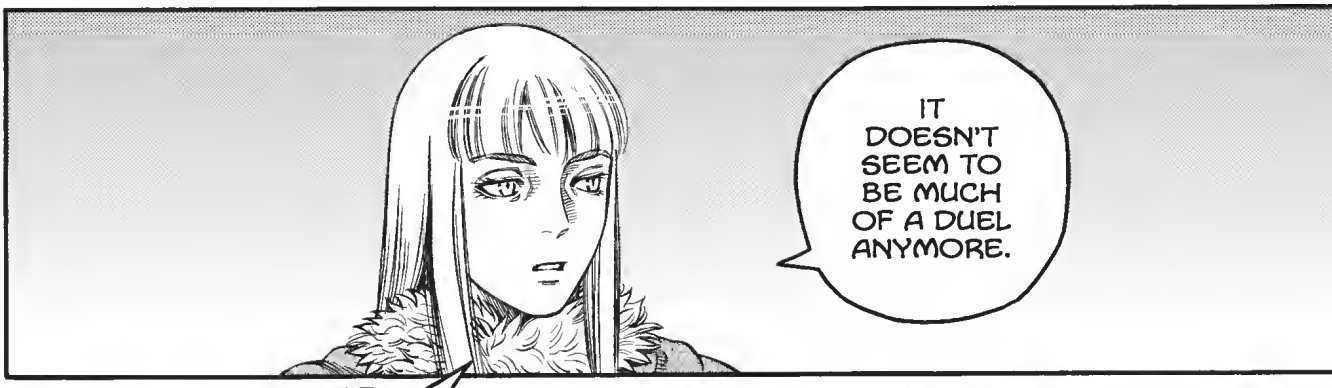
NO...

EAR...
HAAKON...
BALDR...
ULF...
ASKELADD'S ENTIRE BAND...?
THEY'RE ALL... DEAD...?!
THEY'RE ...
!
YOU'RE STILL ALIVE!!
BROTHER!! IS THAT YOU, BROTHER?!
IRSH

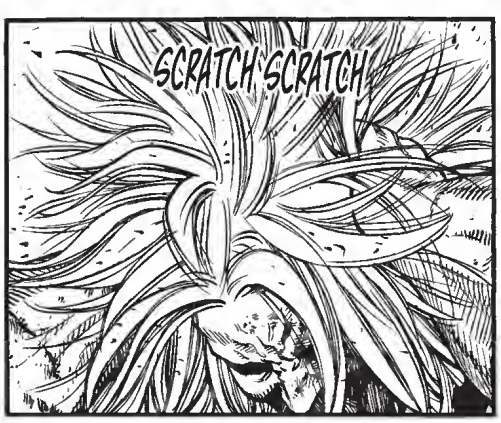
I'M SORRY... IF ONLY I'D BROUGHT BACK THE PRINCE SOONER...
FLOP FLOP
TORGRIM! ARE YOU HURT?! CAN YOU WALK?!
WHO ARE YOU, MISTER?
SOB...
BROTH-ER?
...

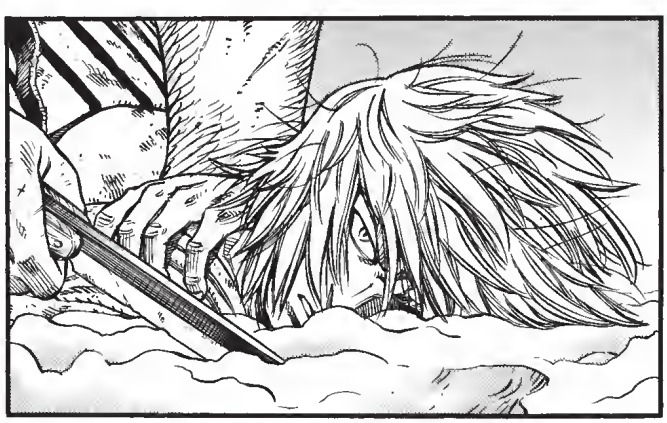
WSHH...
IT ASTONISHES ME HOW MUCH KILLING YOU CAN UNDERTAKE...
...WITHOUT GROWING WEARY OF IT.

NO ONE HAS A RIGHT TO INTERFERE IN A DUEL. NOT KINGS, NOT GODS.
BEGONE, GIRL.

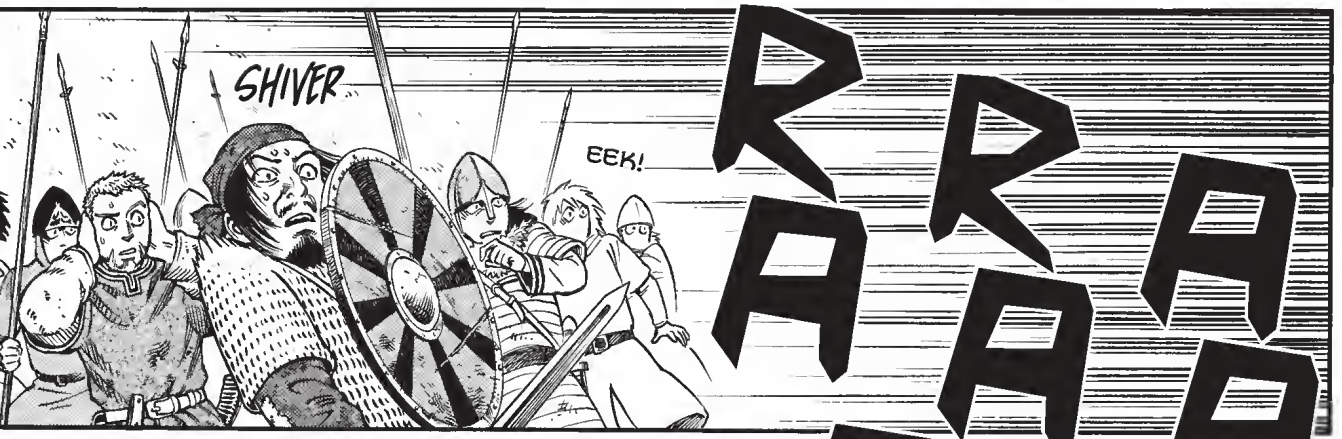

IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE MUCH OF A DUEL ANYMORE.

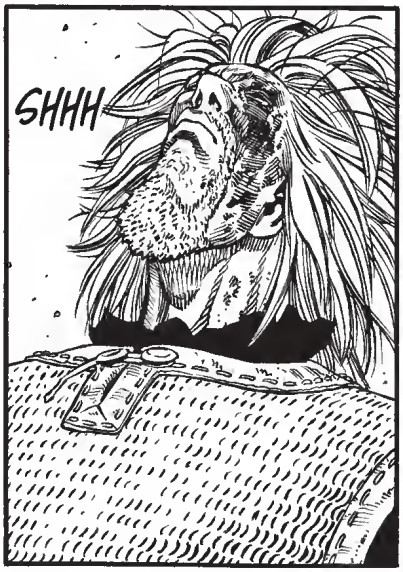
IF YOU ARE A LEADER OF MEN, THORKELL, PERHAPS YOU SHOULD DEMONSTRATE PRIDE AND GRACE BEFORE YOUR FOLLOWERS.

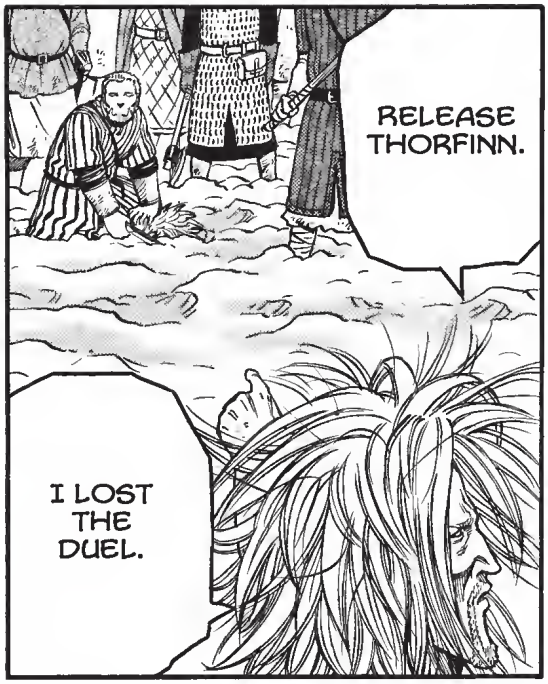

SCRATCH SCRATCH

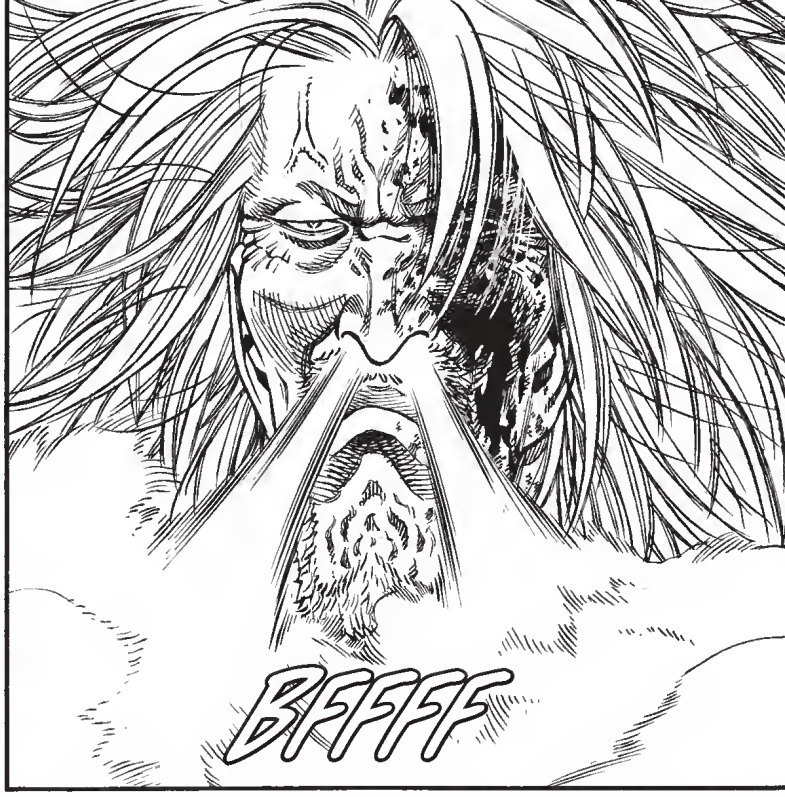


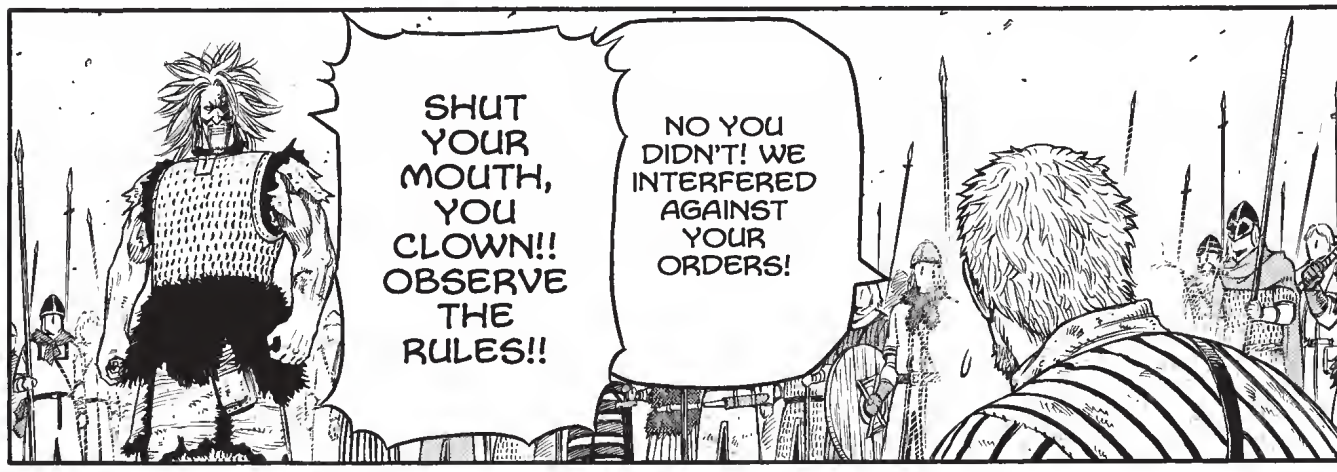
SHUT UP, SHUT UP, SHUT UP!! AAARGH!!
I KNOW THESE THINGS, YOU LITTLE FUCKING BRAT! I DON'T NEED YOU TELLING ME WHAT TO DO!!

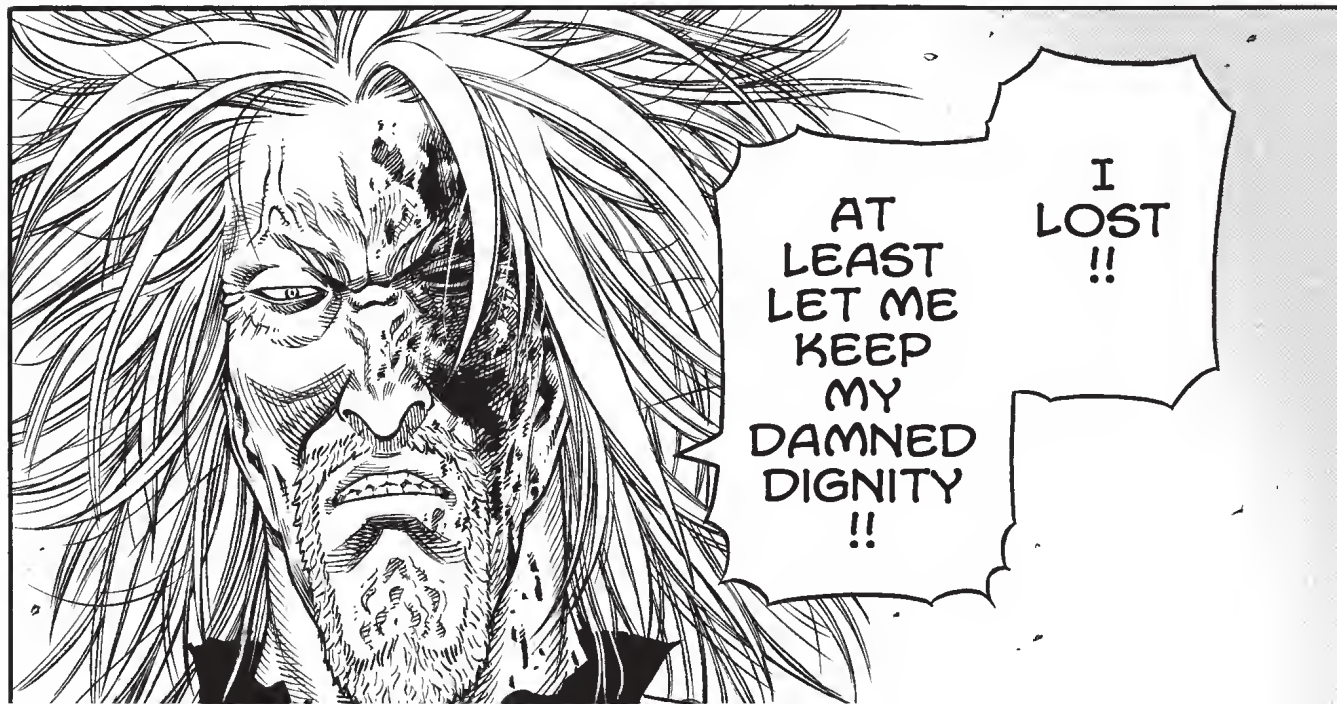

SHIVER
EEK!
RRAAAHHH


SHHH

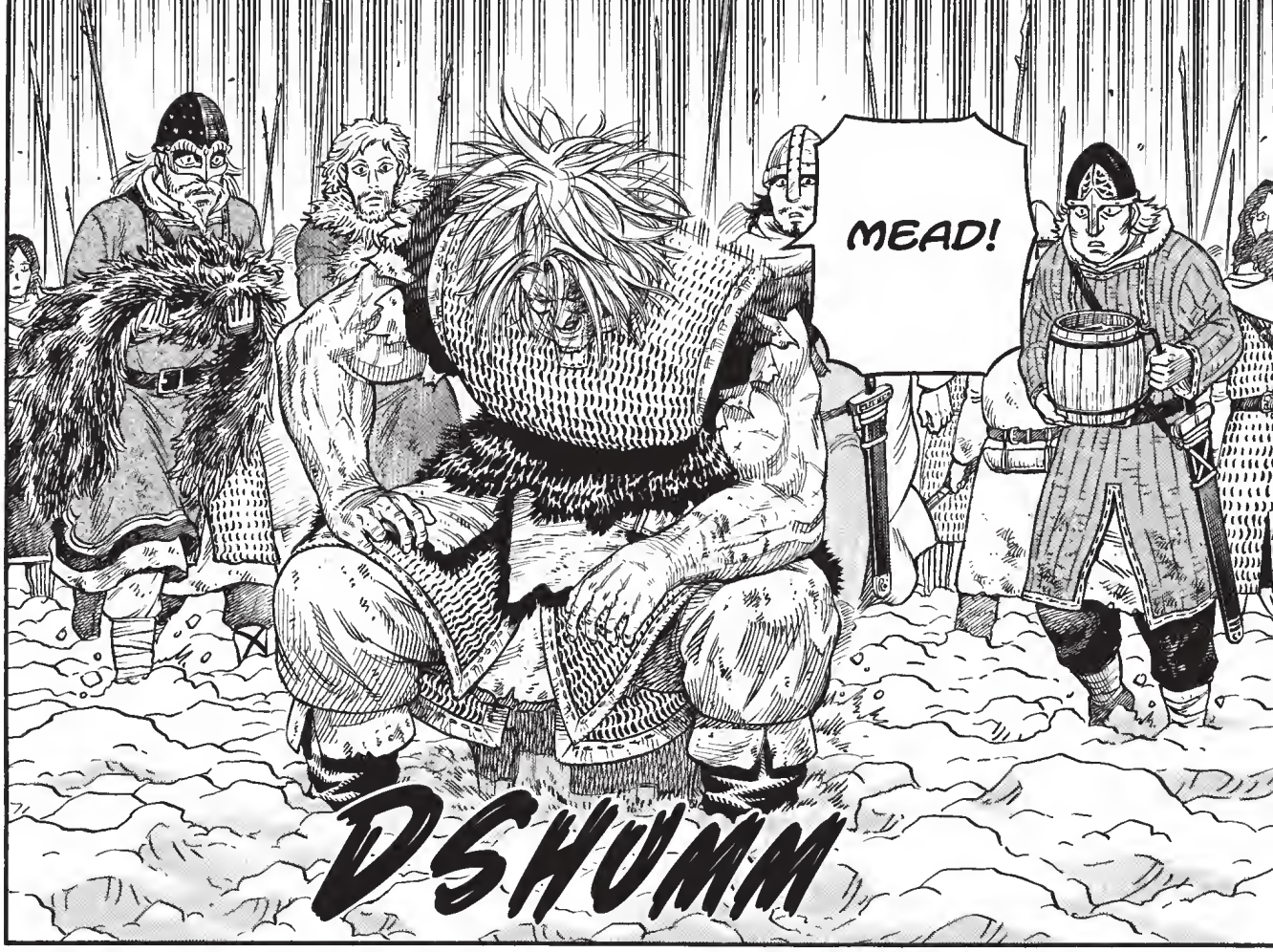

RELEASE THORFINN.
I LOST THE DUEL.

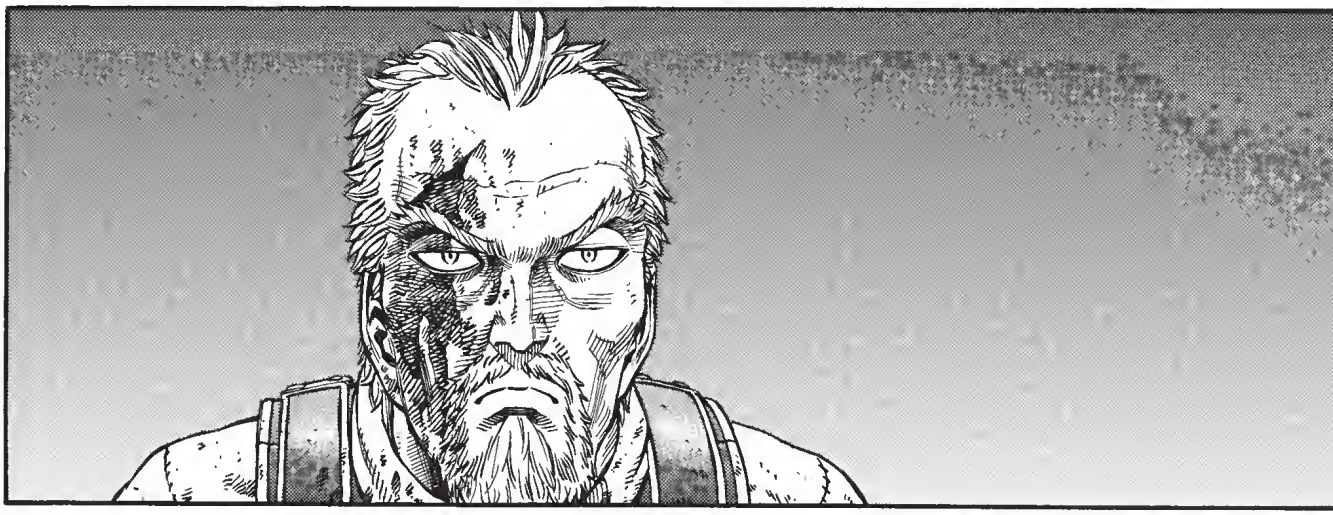

BFFFF


SHUT YOUR MOUTH, YOU CLOWN!! OBSERVE THE RULES!!
NO YOU DIDN'T! WE INTERFERED AGAINST YOUR ORDERS!


I LOST !!
AT LEAST LET ME KEEP MY DAMNED DIGNITY !!

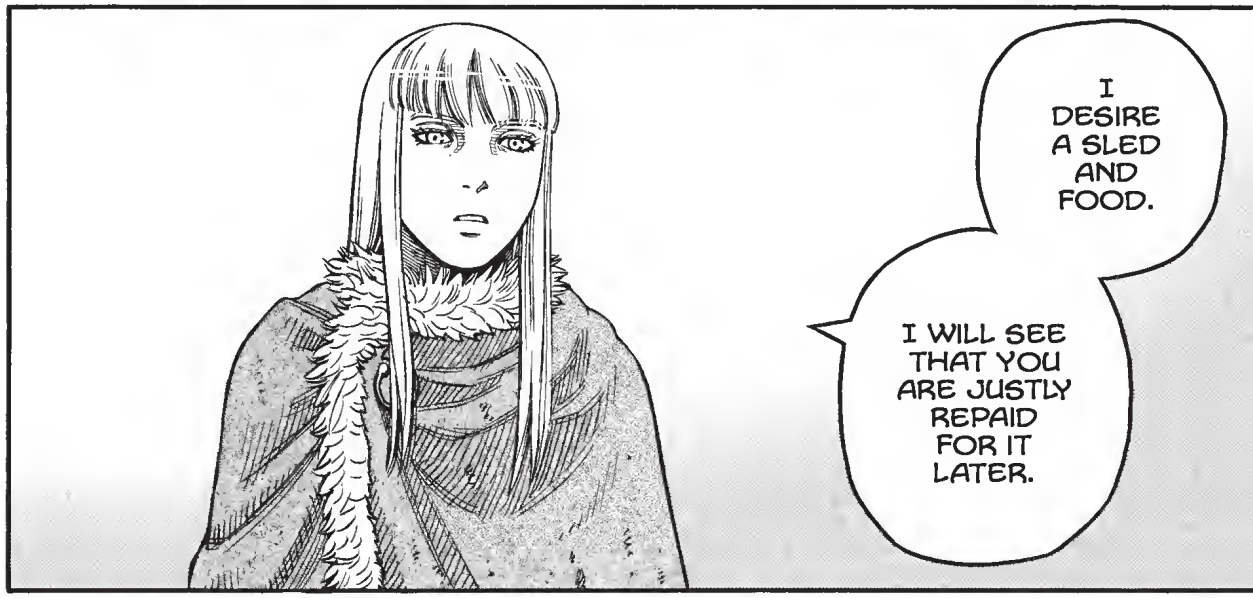
DO AS HE SAYS.
...ASGEIR...
ZSH...
IN FIFTY YEARS OF LIFE, I'VE NEVER HAD SUCH A BAD DAY!!
AAAAGH, THIS SUCKS!!

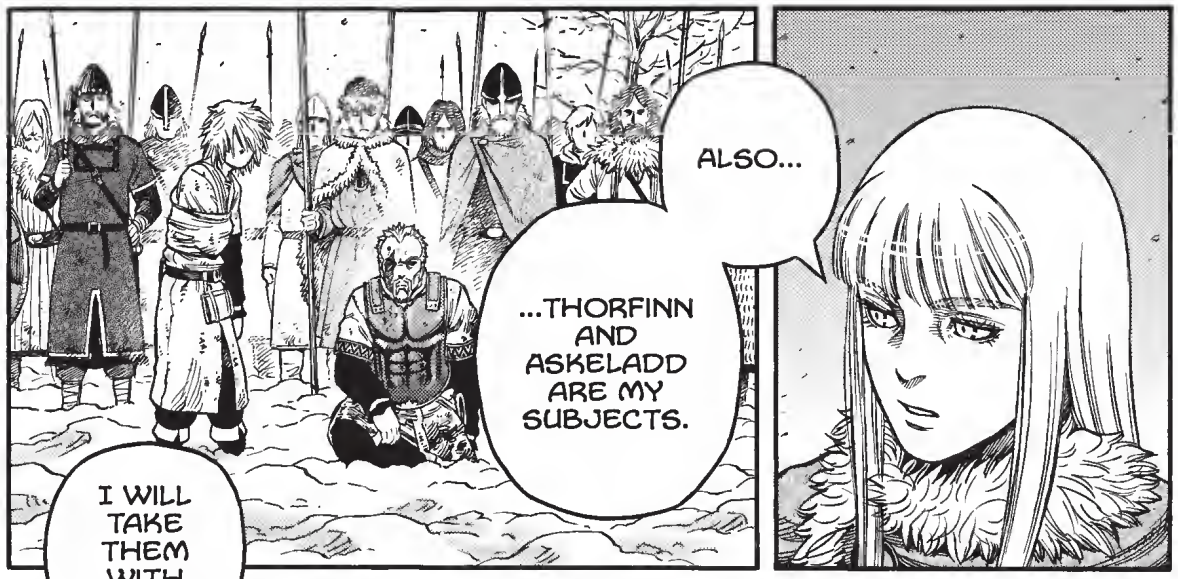

MEAD!
DSHUMM



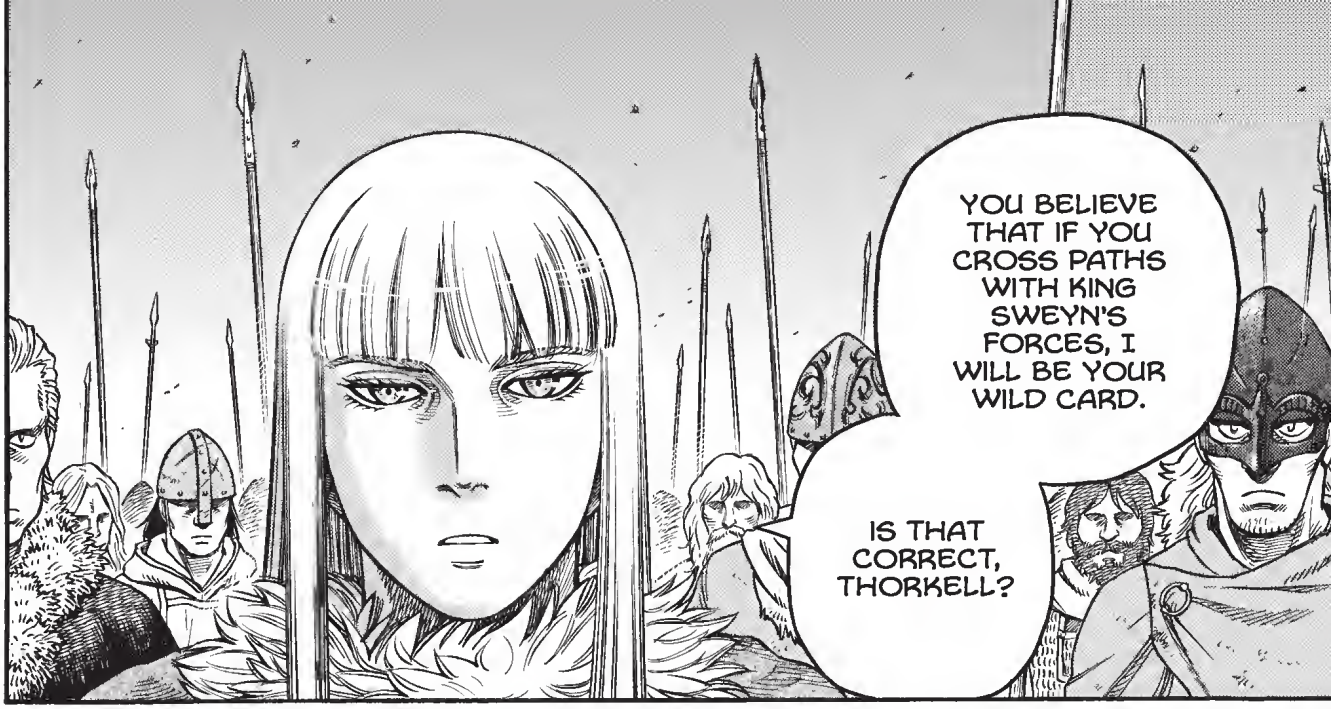
ISH
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE HE CHANGES HIS MIND.
DON'T WASTE ANY TIME.
HEY.
POINTY-HAIR.
IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE, BE MY GUEST.
I'M STAYING.
QUIT SQUALLING, BOY, AND WATCH.
WHY DID I GO THROUGH ALL OF THIS TORTURE TO—
DO YOU THINK THIS IS SOME KIND OF JOKE?!
THIS IS THE GOOD PART.

DOESN'T HE FEEL PAIN...?
SO?
WHY ARE YOU HERE, PRINCE?
JUST TO COME AND JUDGE OUR FIGHT?


I DESIRE A SLED AND FOOD.
I WILL SEE THAT YOU ARE JUSTLY REPAID FOR IT LATER.


ALSO...
...THORFINN AND ASKELADD ARE MY SUBJECTS.
I WILL TAKE THEM WITH ME.

ARE YOU DENSE?
WHAT HUNTER RELEASES HIS PREY ONCE IT'S JUMPED INTO HIS GRASP?
SOFTEN UP HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS A BIT.
GO ON, BOYS!
KSHK...
ZSH...
ZRSH...
GIVE UP ON THE PRINCE ALREADY!! LET'S GO!!
SHUT UP!! STAY PUT AND WATCH!


YOU BELIEVE THAT IF YOU CROSS PATHS WITH KING SWEYN'S FORCES, I WILL BE YOUR WILD CARD.
IS THAT CORRECT, THORKELL?

ANYTHING ELSE?
YES, YOUR HIGHNESS.
YOU'RE MY PREY, MY HOSTAGE, AND MY GOLDEN GOOSE.

I'M GOING NO-WHERE.
STEP BACK.

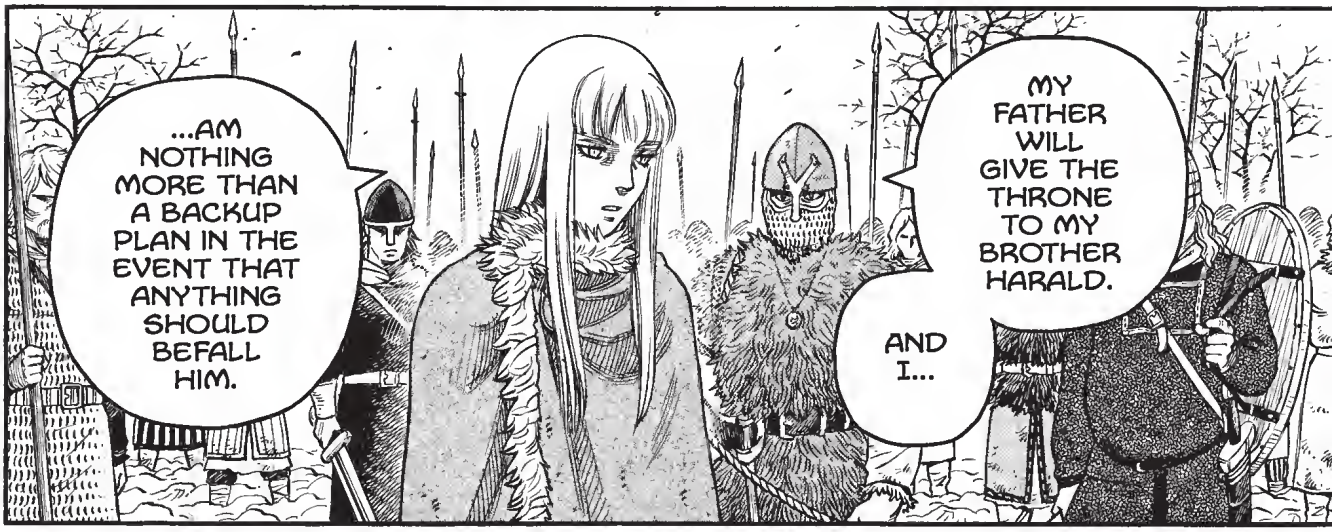
DO NOT TOUCH ME, KNAVE.

JRK
ZSH

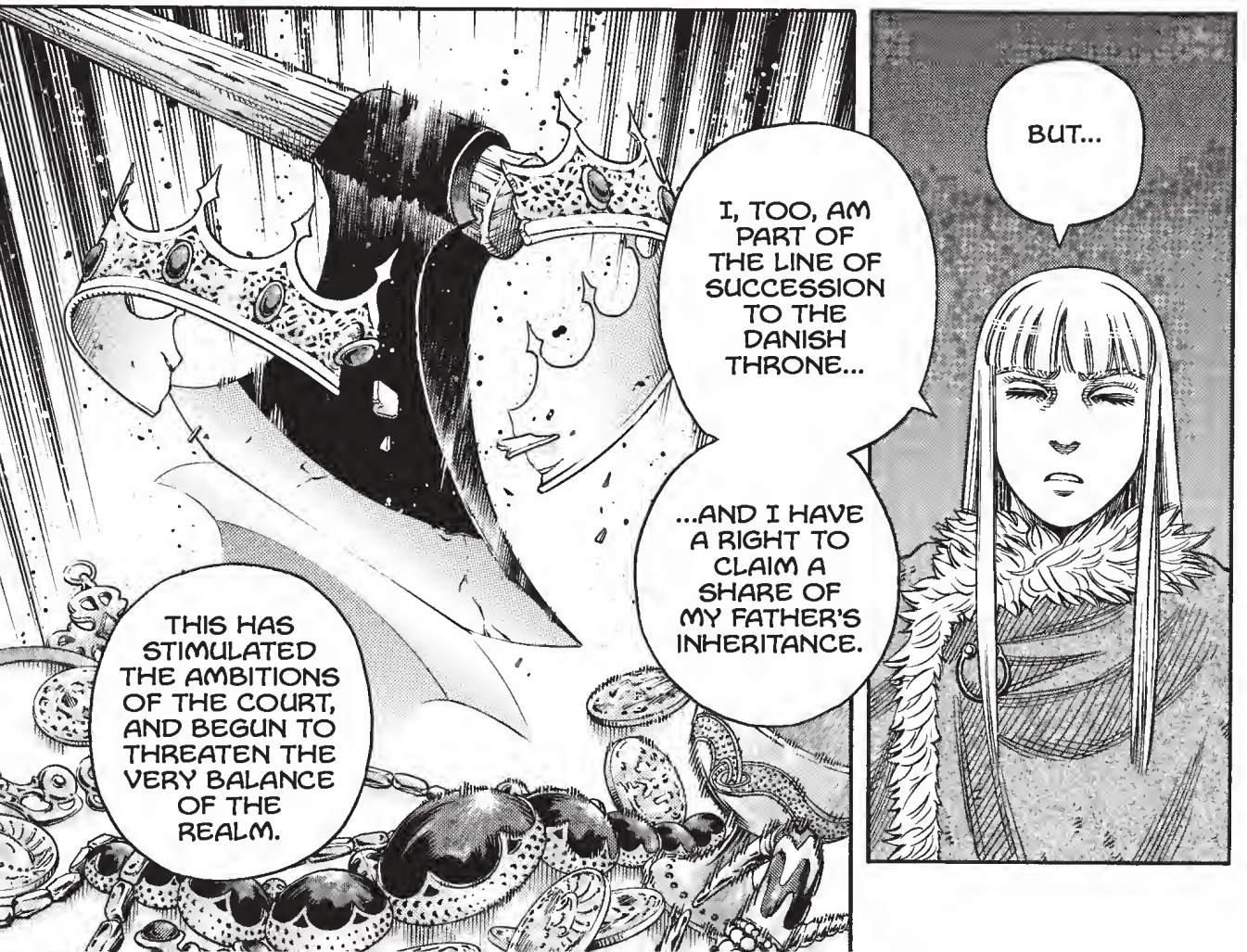
OHO...
WELL, IT HASN'T TAKEN LONG FOR YOU TO SPEAK LIKE A KING.
WHAT HAPPENED?
I SAW RAGNAR'S BODY IN THE VILLAGE WE PASSED THROUGH YESTERDAY...
...HIGH-NESS.

FOR MY FATHER...
I HAVE NO VALUE AS A HOSTAGE, THORKELL.
...

MY FATHER...
...DOES NOT LOVE ME.


MY FATHER WILL GIVE THE THRONE TO MY BROTHER HARALD.
AND I...
...AM NOTHING MORE THAN A BACKUP PLAN IN THE EVENT THAT ANYTHING SHOULD BEFALL HIM.

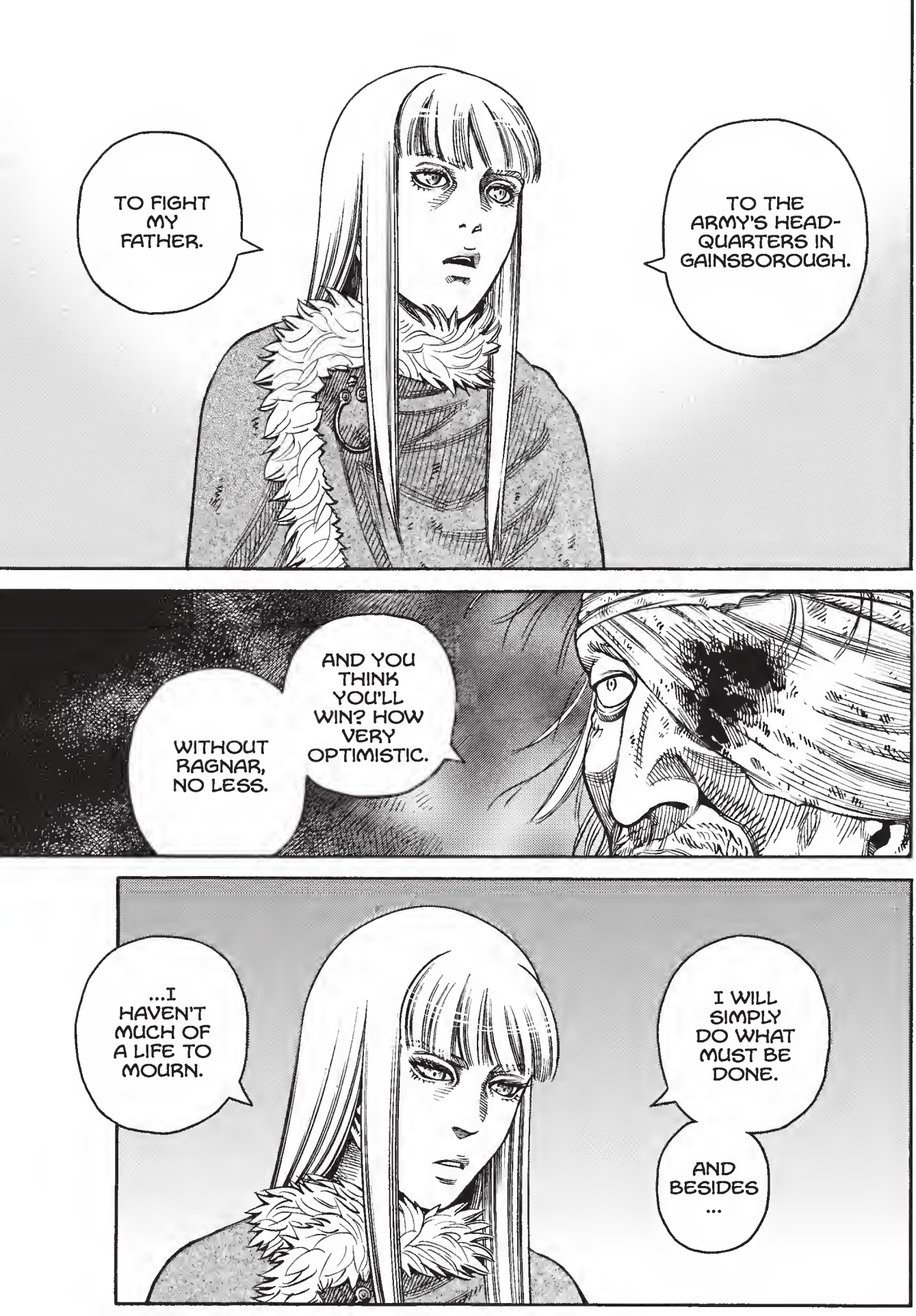
SEVEN-TEEN YEARS OF LIFE...
...SERVING AS NOTHING MORE THAN AN EMERGENCY SUBSTITUTE.

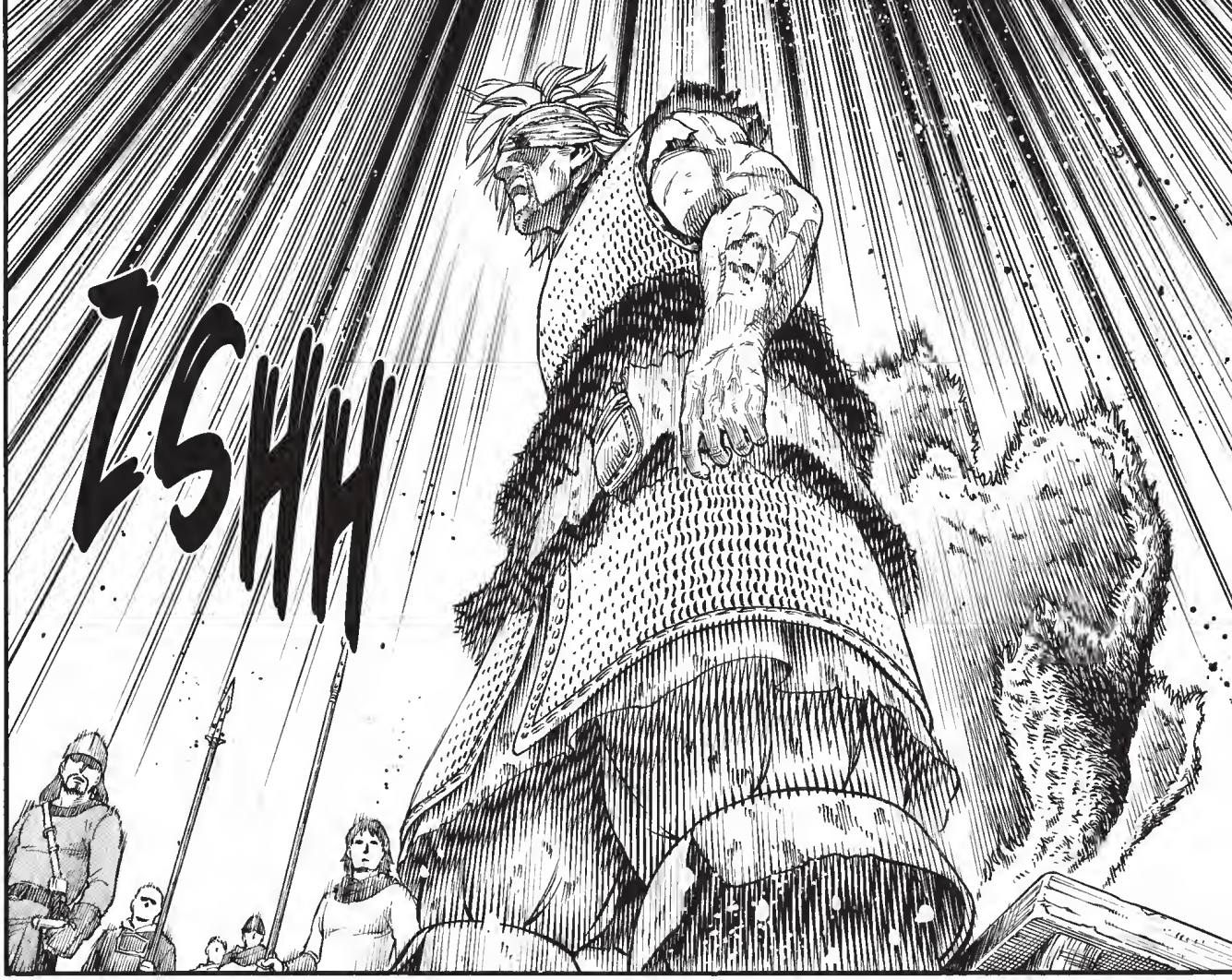

BUT...
I, TOO, AM PART OF THE LINE OF SUCCESSION TO THE DANISH THRONE...
...AND I HAVE A RIGHT TO CLAIM A SHARE OF MY FATHER'S INHERITANCE.
THIS HAS STIMULATED THE AMBITIONS OF THE COURT, AND BEGUN TO THREATEN THE VERY BALANCE OF THE REALM.

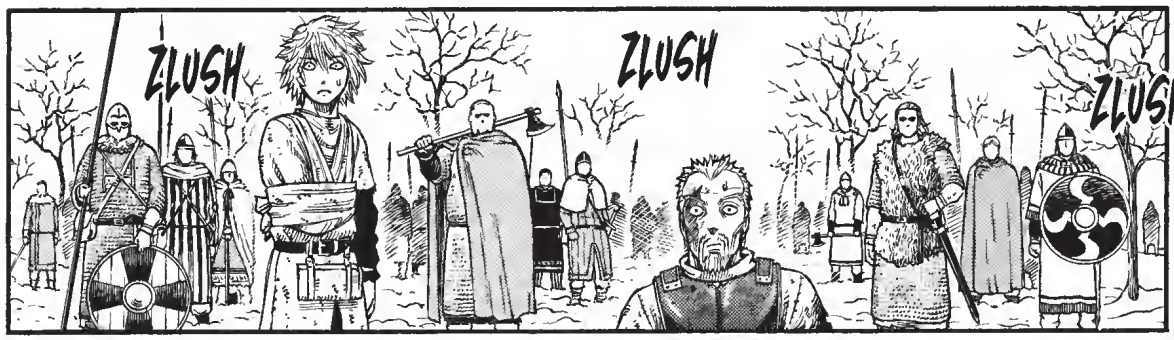
AT THIS POINT, MY EXISTENCE HAS BECOME A SOURCE OF LAMENT FOR MY FATHER AND THE KINGDOM.
DO YOU KNOW HOW TO GROW FRUIT?
PLUMP, RIPE AND SUCCULENT FRUIT.
THE FIRST RULE...
...IS TO PRUNE THE WEAKER FRUIT OFF THE BRANCH AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.

YOU'RE SAYING KING SWEYN...
...IS HOPING THAT I'LL KILL YOU...
...MY FATHER THE KING DOES NOT WISH TO SULLY HIS OWN HANDS WITH THE BLOOD OF HIS SON.
IN ESSENCE ...
DEATH IN BATTLE IS A MORE PROPER MEANS OF DEALING WITH ME THAN ASSASSINATION OR IMPRISONMENT.
AND REGARDLESS, THERE'S NO HARM IN SEIZING HIM, BOSS.
THERE'S NO PROOF TO BACK THE PRINCE'S STORY.

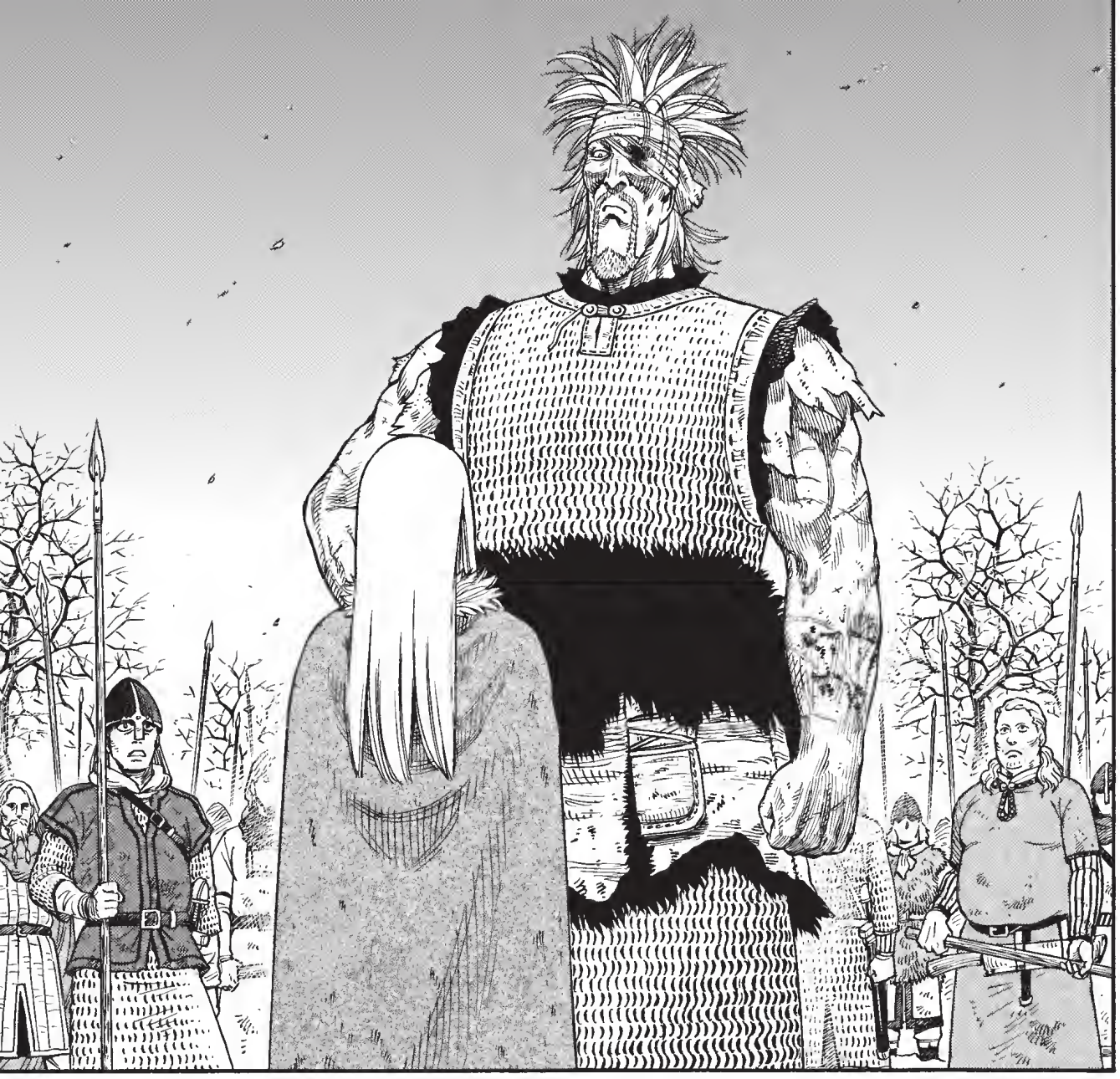
AND HE AIN'T LYIN'.
I'M TALKING TO THE PRINCE.
KEEP YOUR TRAP SHUT.
...
LET'S SAY...
...THAT I ALLOW YOU TO WALK FREE.
WHERE WILL YOU GO...
...GIVEN YOUR PLIGHT?

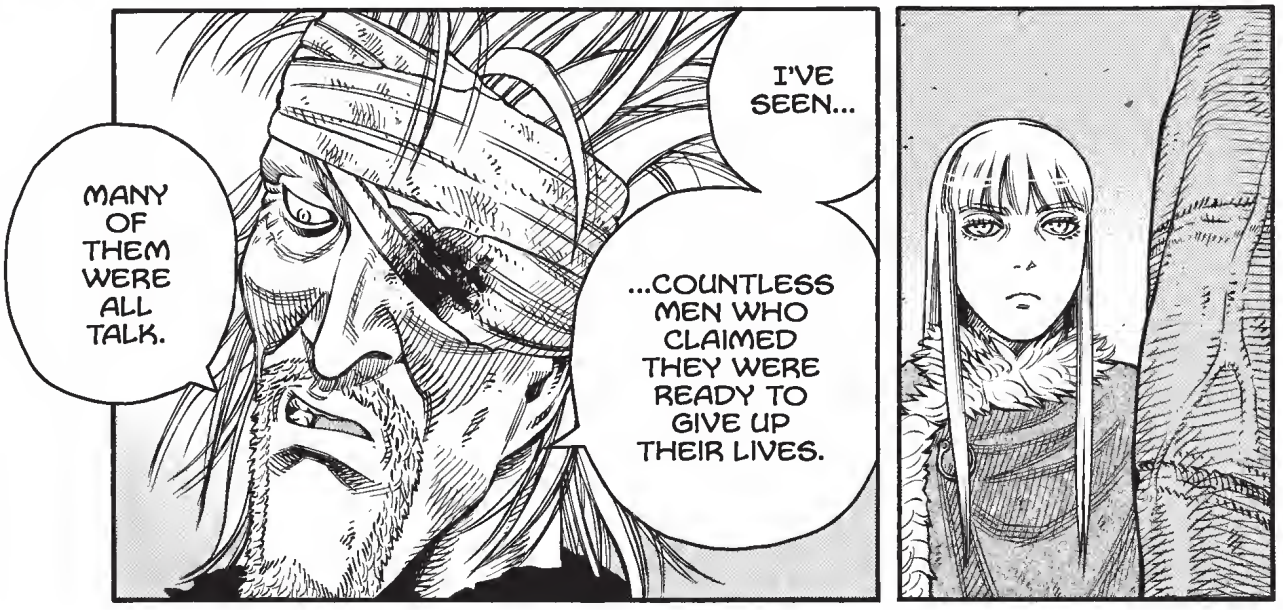

TO FIGHT MY FATHER.
TO THE ARMY'S HEAD-QUARTERS IN GAINSBOROUGH.
WITHOUT RAGNAR, NO LESS.
AND YOU THINK YOU'LL WIN? HOW VERY OPTIMISTIC.
...I HAVEN'T MUCH OF A LIFE TO MOURN.
I WILL SIMPLY DO WHAT MUST BE DONE.
AND BESIDES ...

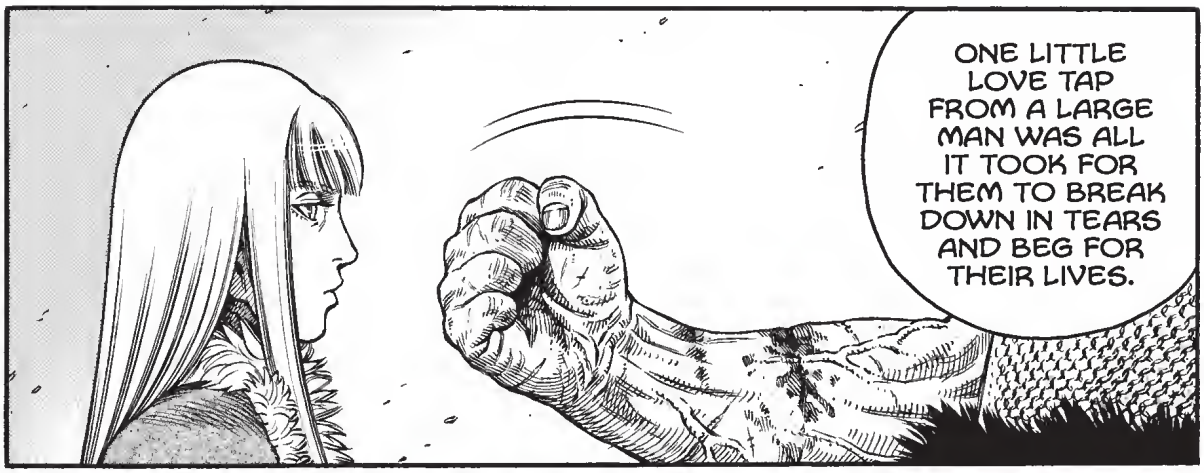

ZSHH

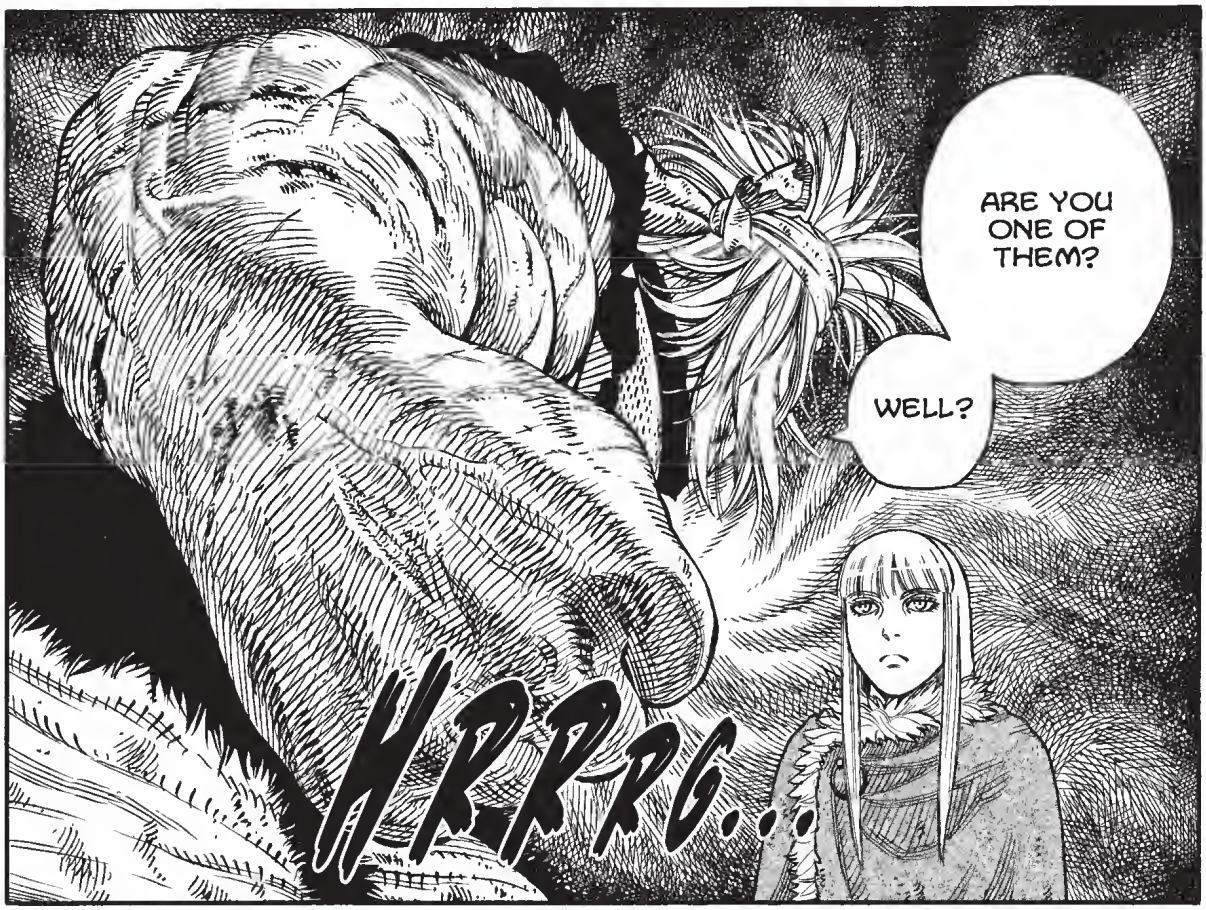

ZLUSH
ZLUSH
ZLUSH

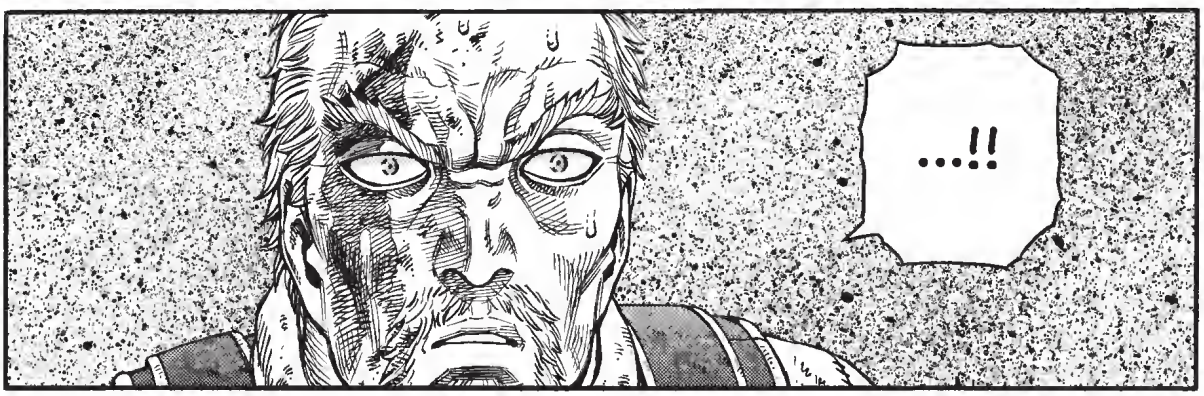
ZRSH

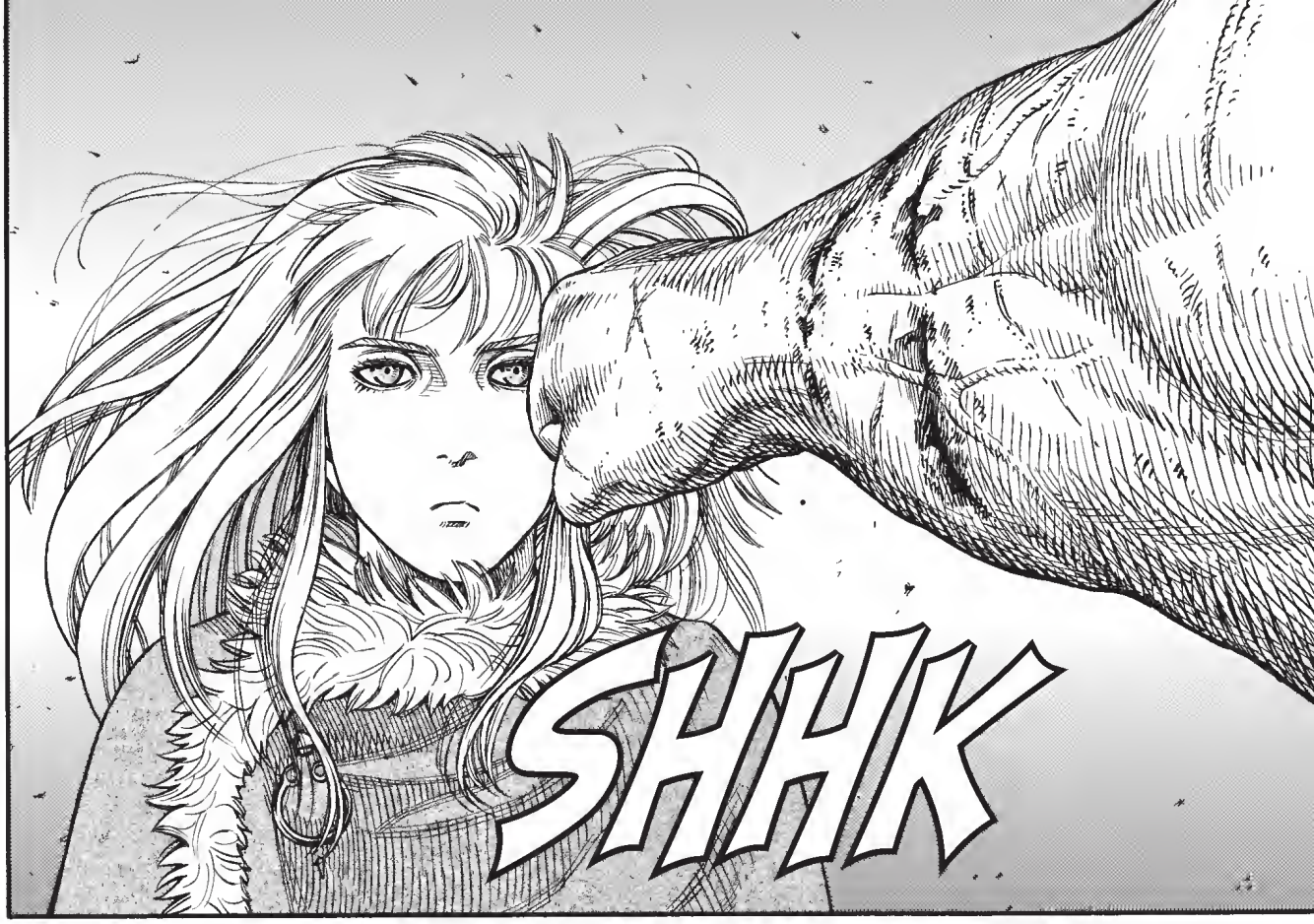


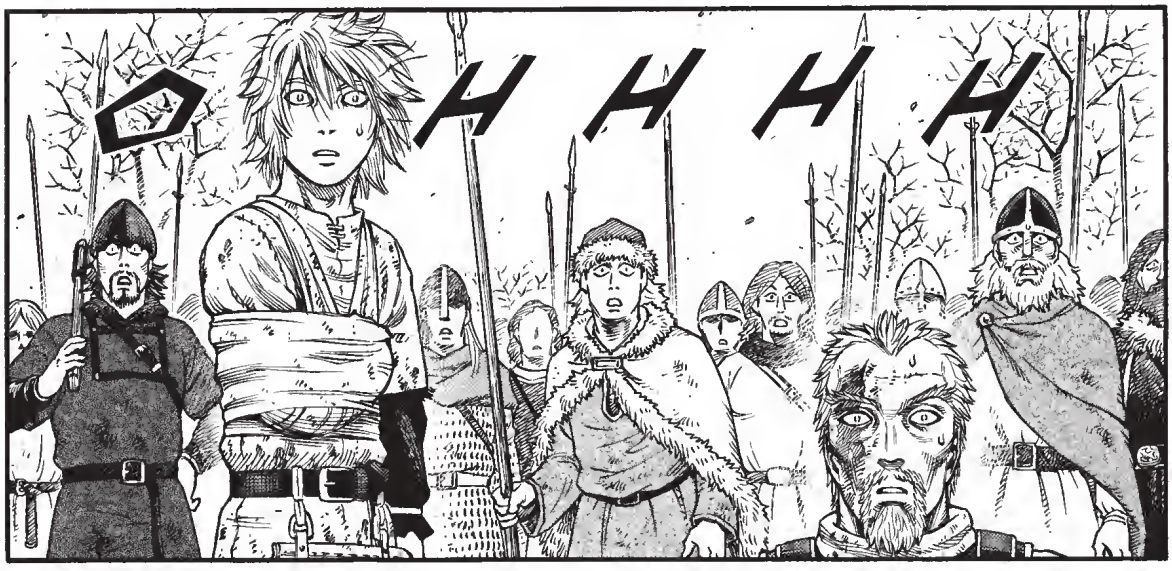

I'VE SEEN...
...COUNTLESS MEN WHO CLAIMED THEY WERE READY TO GIVE UP THEIR LIVES.
MANY OF THEM WERE ALL TALK.

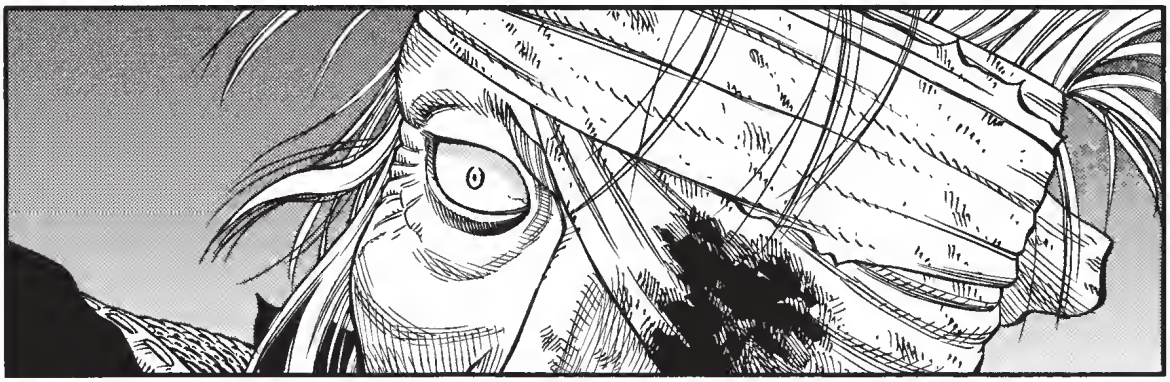

ONE LITTLE LOVE TAP FROM A LARGE MAN WAS ALL IT TOOK FOR THEM TO BREAK DOWN IN TEARS AND BEG FOR THEIR LIVES.

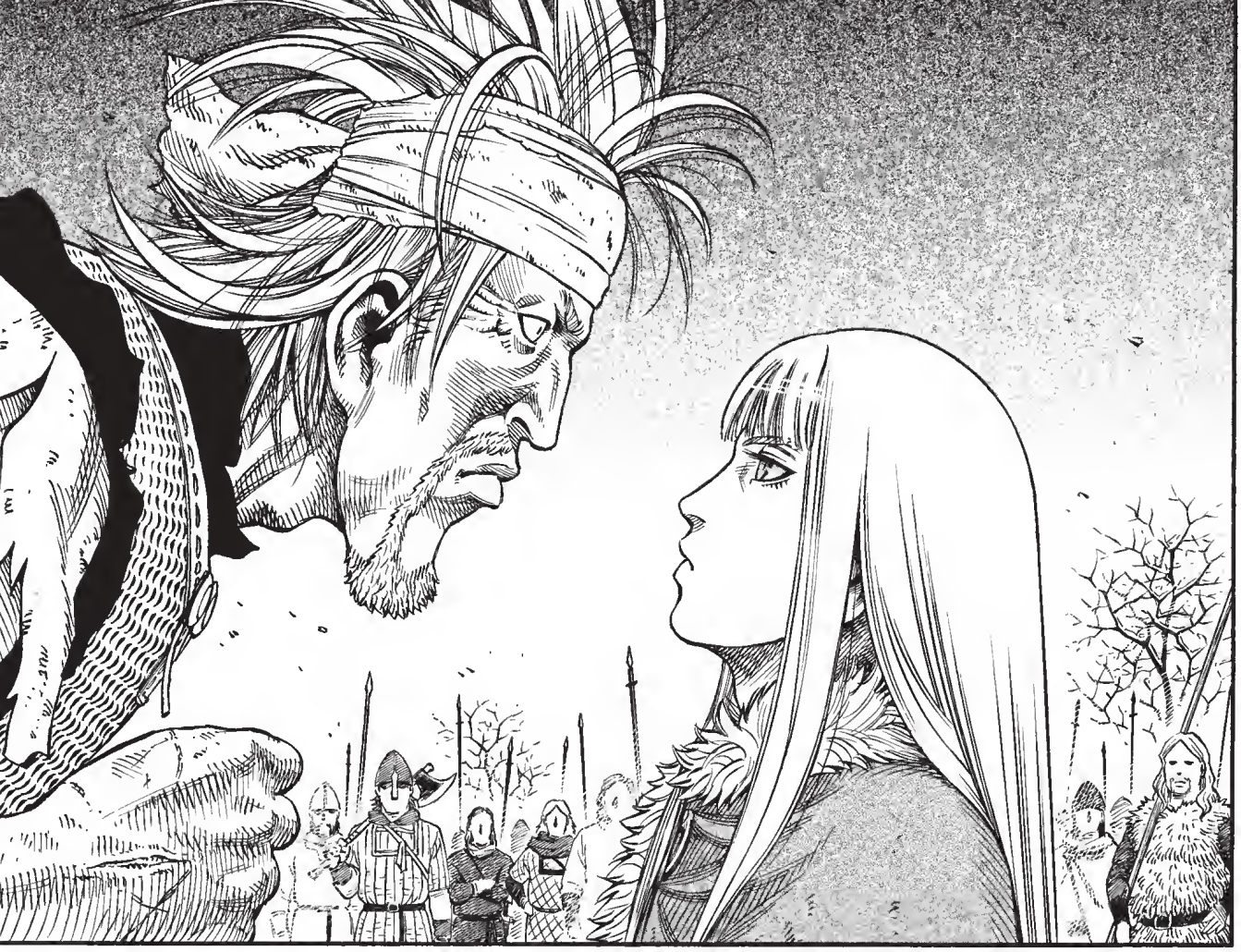

ARE YOU ONE OF THEM?
WELL?
HRRRG...

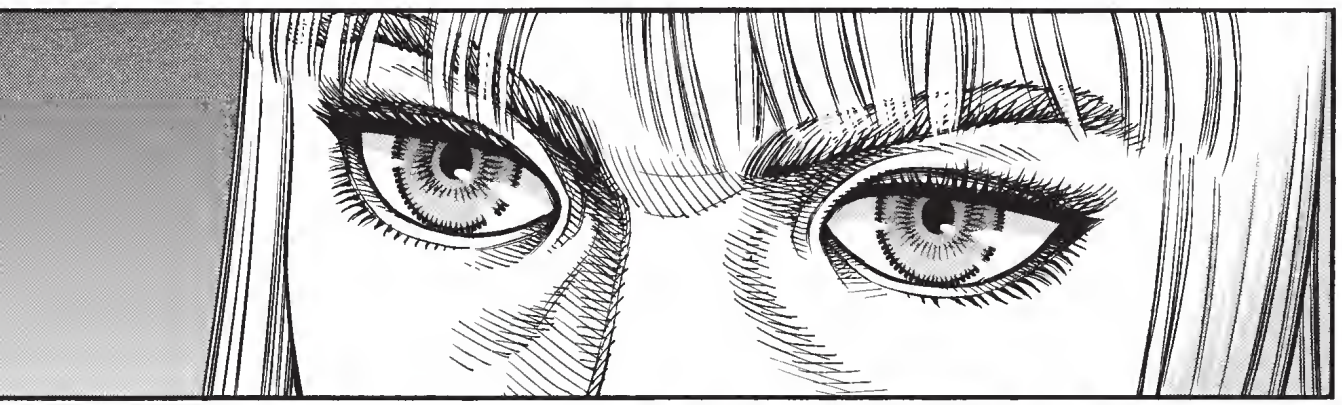

...!!

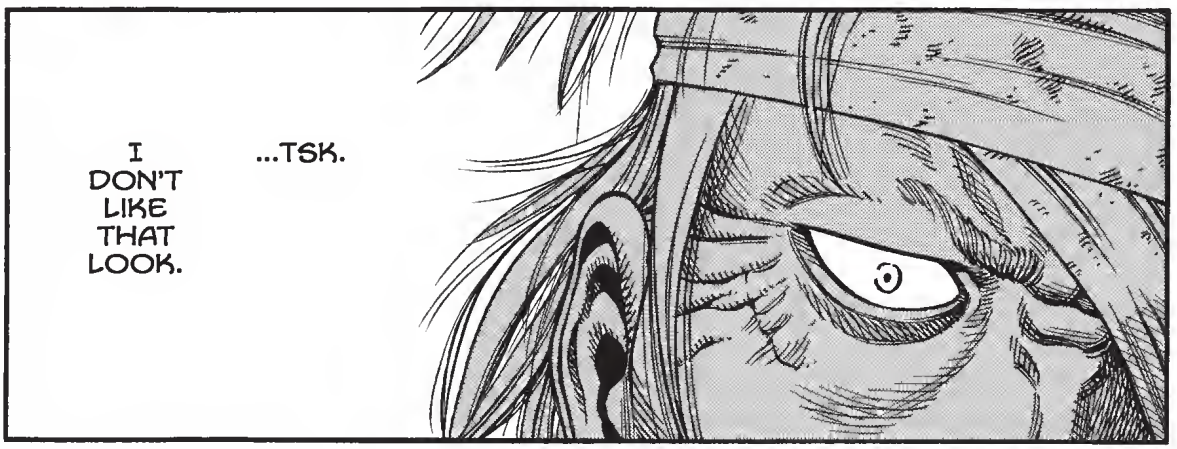

SHHK

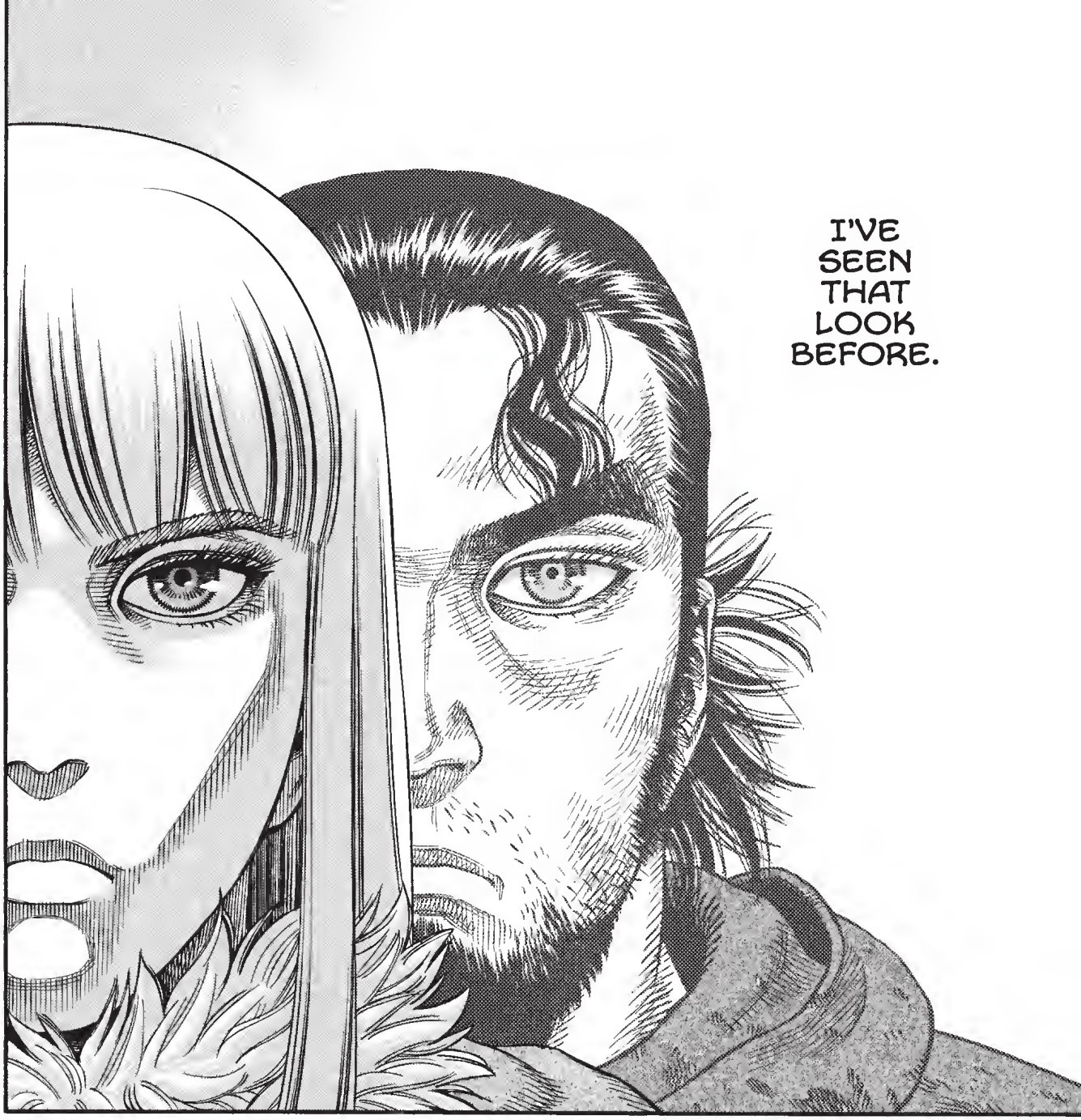

H H H H

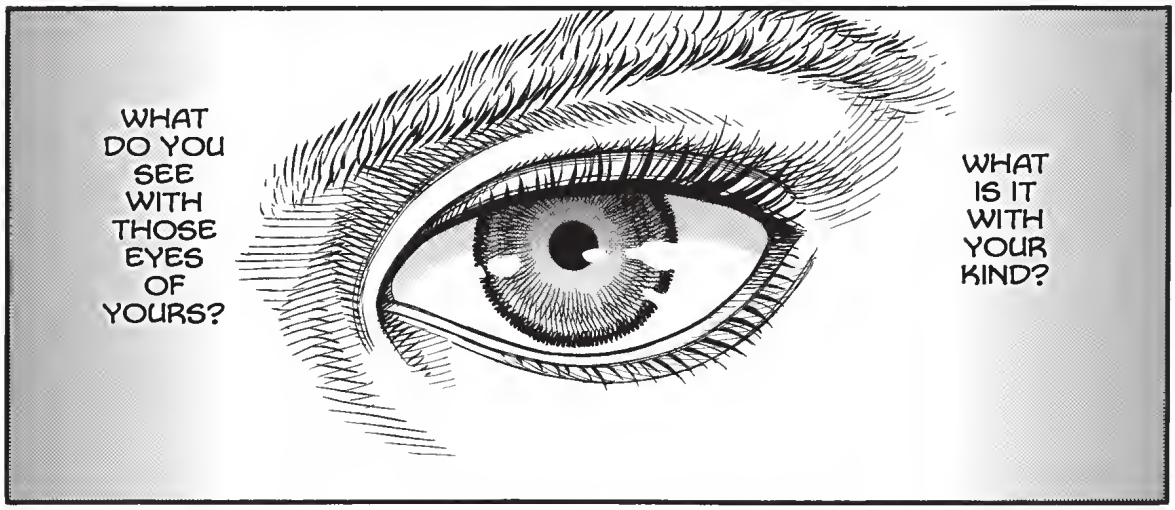


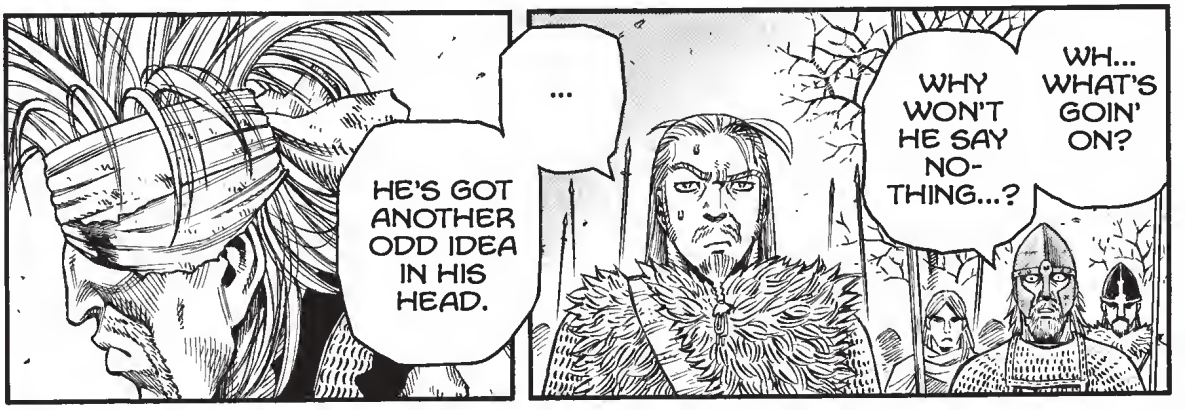




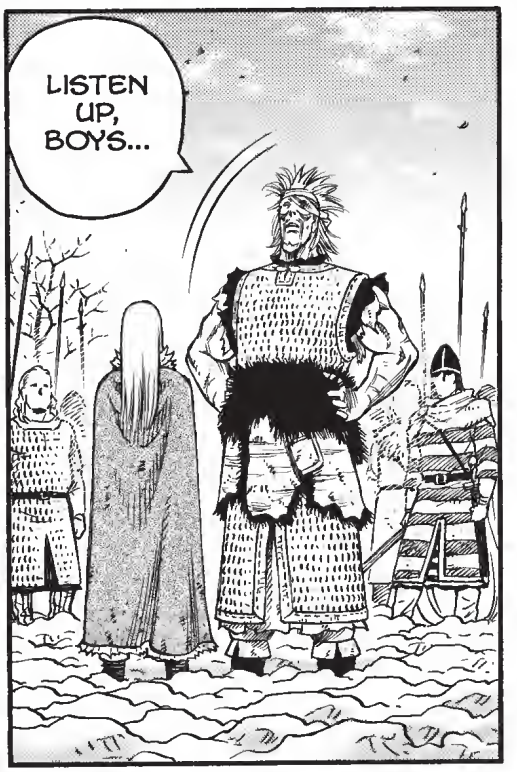

I DON'T LIKE THAT LOOK.
...TSK.

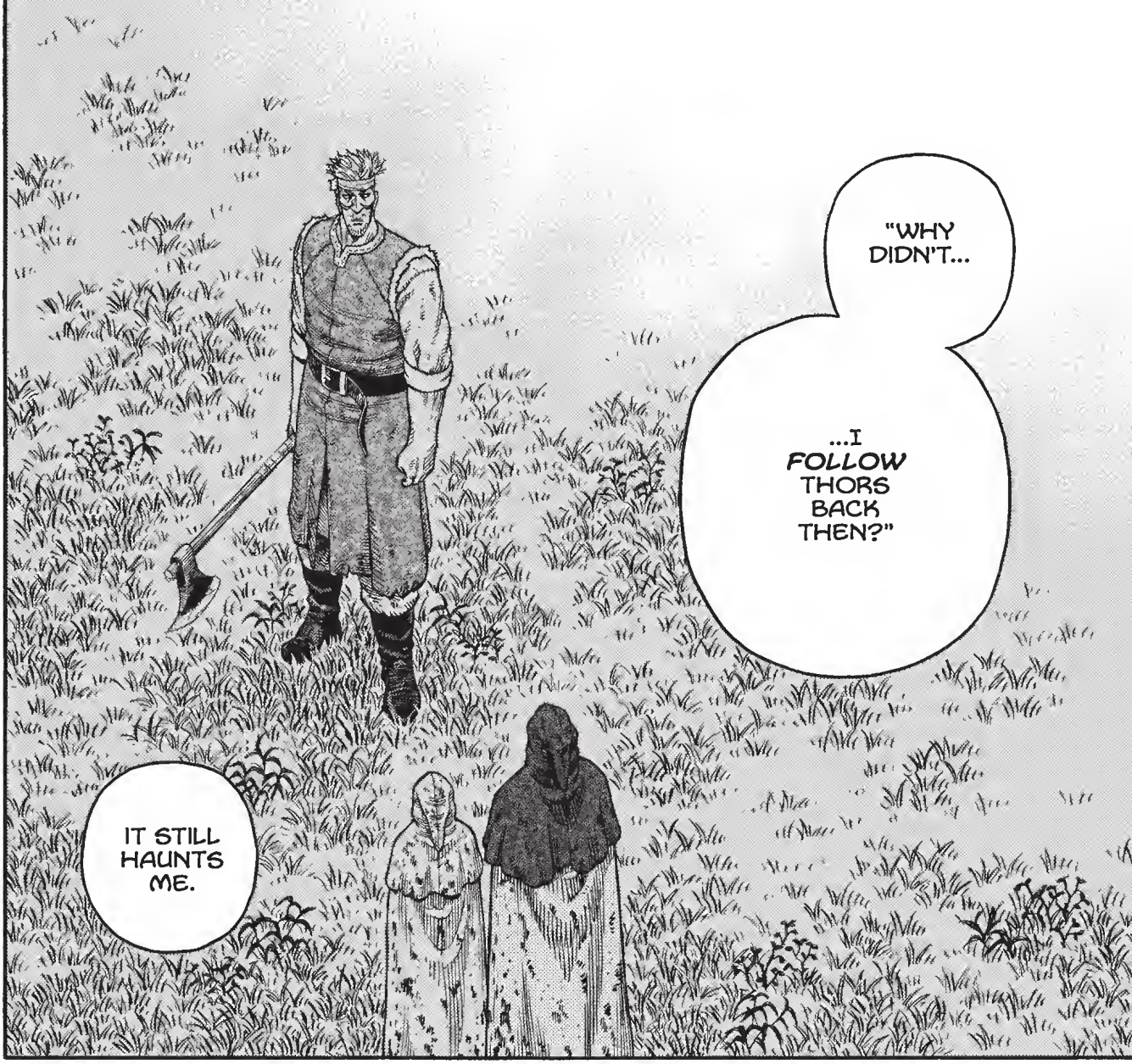

I'VE SEEN THAT LOOK BEFORE.


WHAT DO YOU SEE WITH THOSE EYES OF YOURS?
WHAT IS IT WITH YOUR KIND?

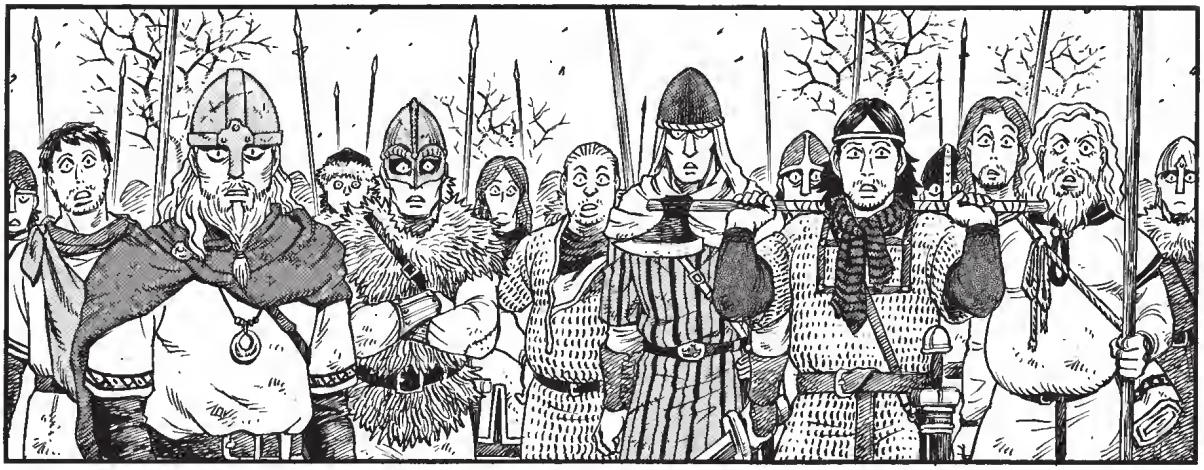

...
HE'S GOT ANOTHER ODD IDEA IN HIS HEAD.
WH... WHAT'S GOIN' ON?
WHY WON'T HE SAY NO-THING...?

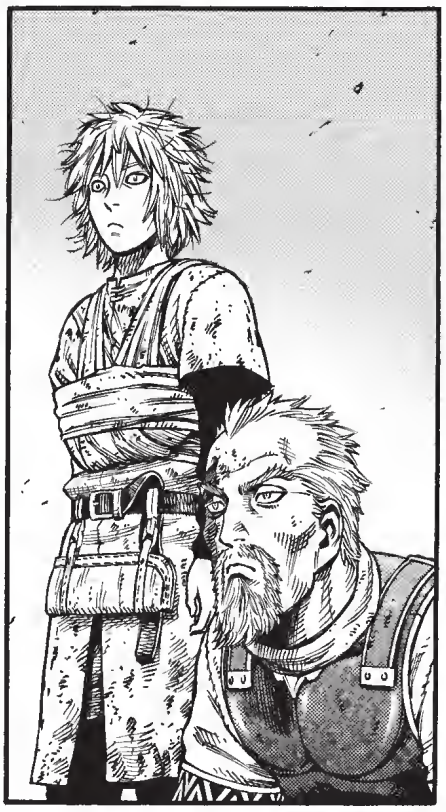
EVEN I...
...HARBOR ONE GREAT REGRET IN MY LIFE.

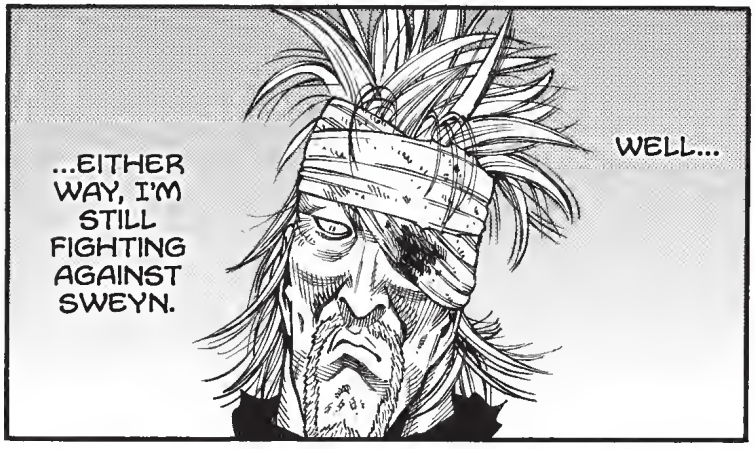

LISTEN UP, BOYS...

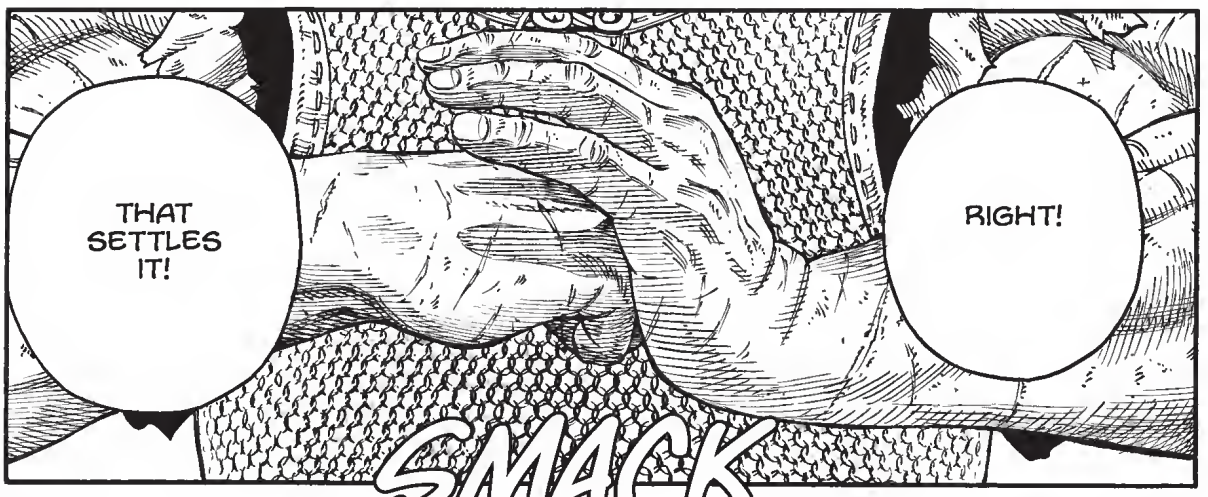

"WHY DIDN'T...
...I FOLLOW THORS BACK THEN?"
IT STILL HAUNTS ME.

A TERRIBLE SHAME.
IF ONLY I'D GONE WITH HIM...
...I MIGHT HAVE DISCOVERED THE SECRET TO BEING A TRUE WARRIOR.

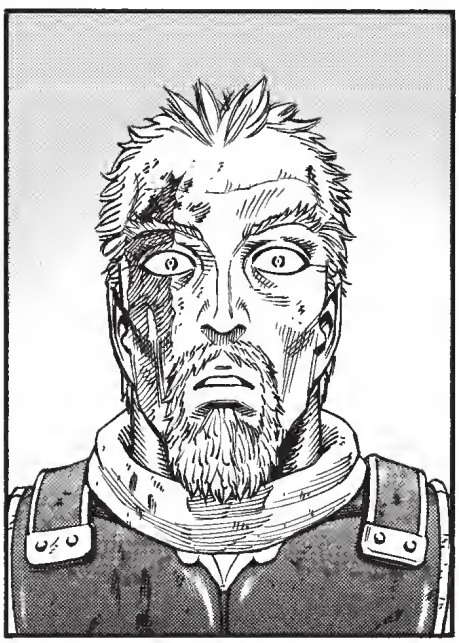


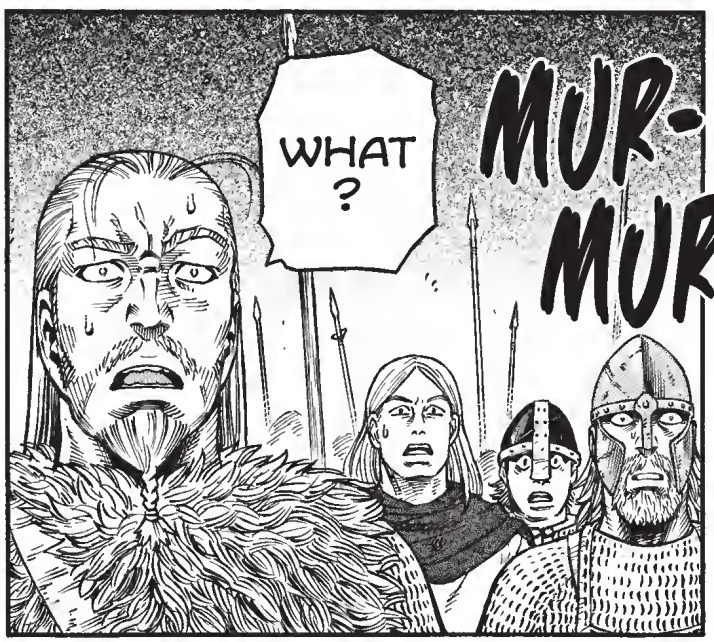



...EITHER WAY, I'M STILL FIGHTING AGAINST SWEYN.
WELL...


THAT SETTLES IT!
RIGHT!
SMACK

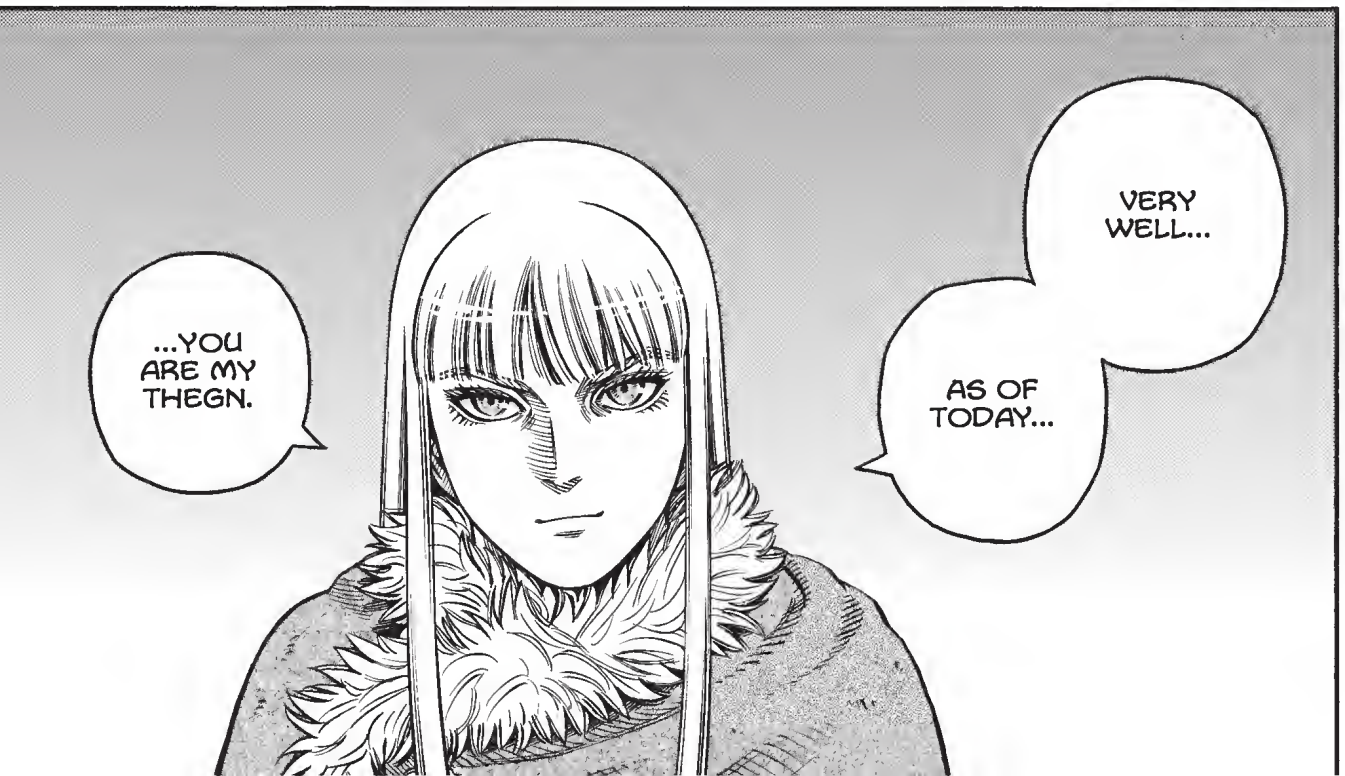
YOU HAVE MY ASSISTANCE IN THIS FIGHT.
I'M ON YOUR SIDE, PRINCE.

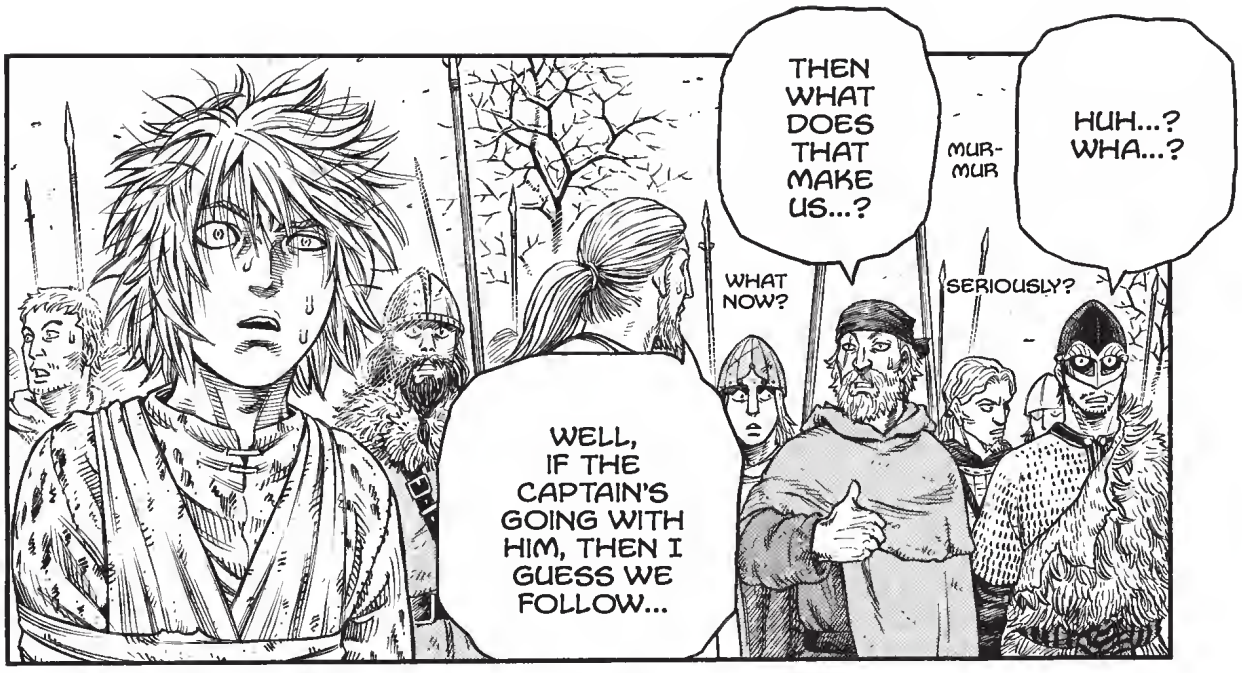


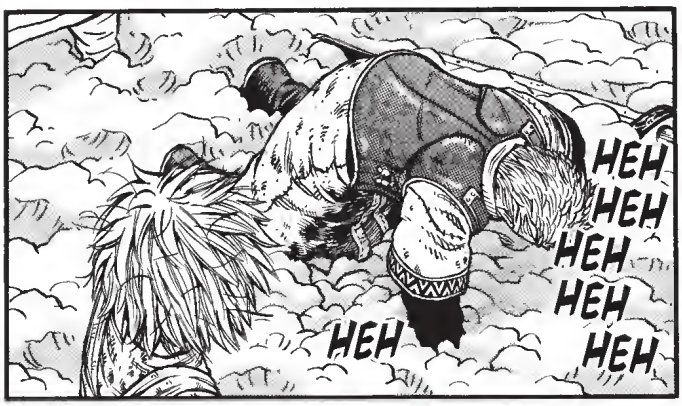

WHAT ?
MUR-MUR

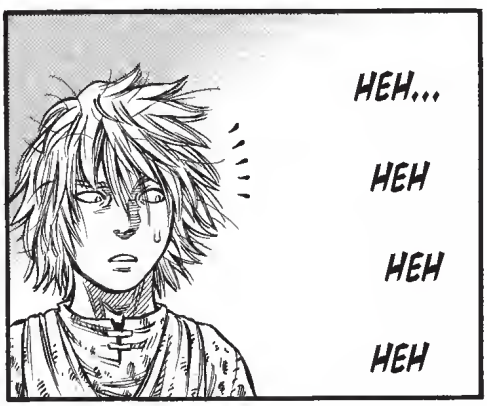
I WANT TO SEE WHAT YOU DO...
...AND WHAT YOU BECOME...
...WITH MY OWN EYE.

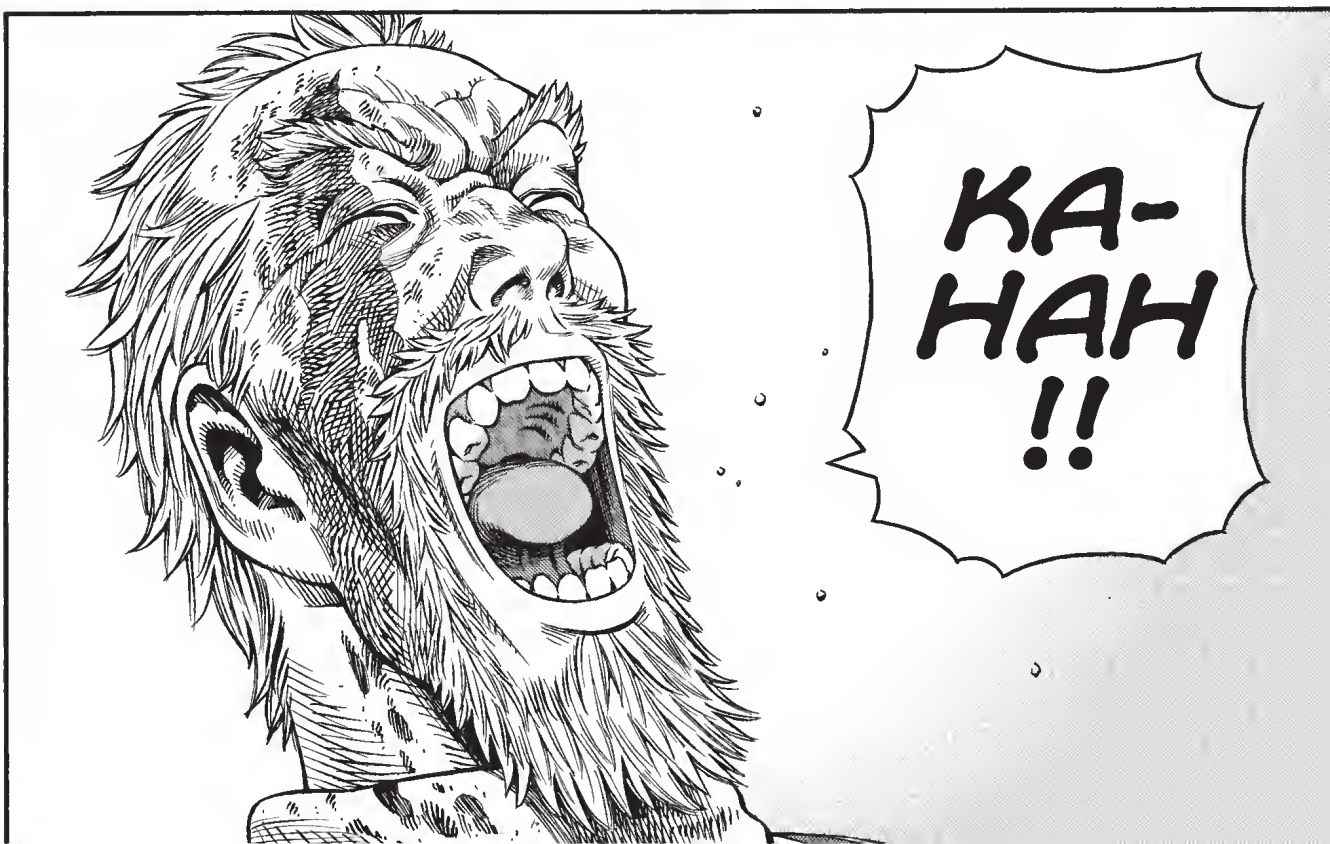
AND IF I FIND IT'S UNWORTHY OF THE EXAMPLE YOU'VE SHOWN, I'LL KILL YOU ON THE SPOT.
GOT THAT?


VERY WELL...
AS OF TODAY...
...YOU ARE MY THEGN.

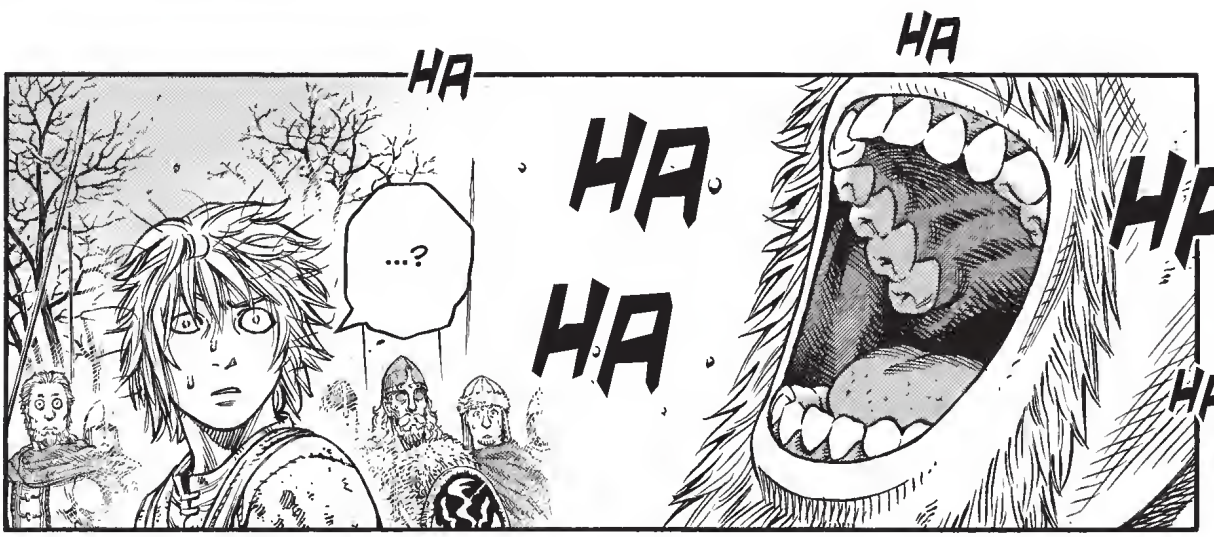

WELL, IF THE CAPTAIN'S GOING WITH HIM, THEN I GUESS WE FOLLOW...
WHAT NOW?
THEN WHAT DOES THAT MAKE US...?
MUR-MUR
SERIOUSLY?
HUH...? WHA...?

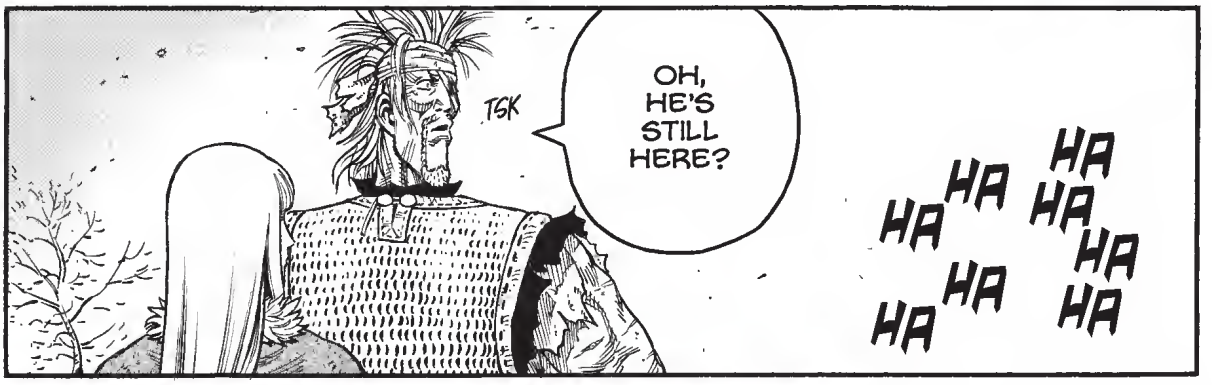

HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH

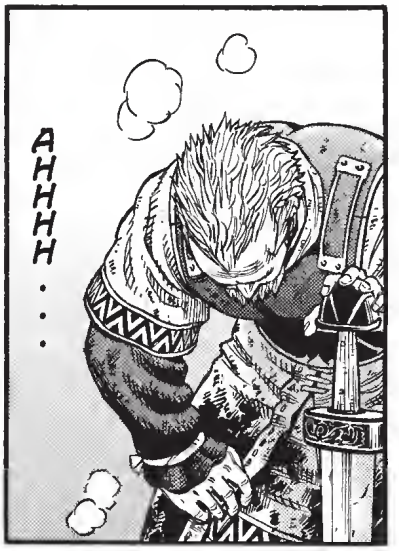

HEH...
HEH
HEH
HEH

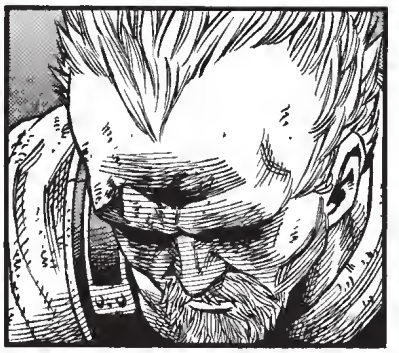

KA-HAH!!

HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA

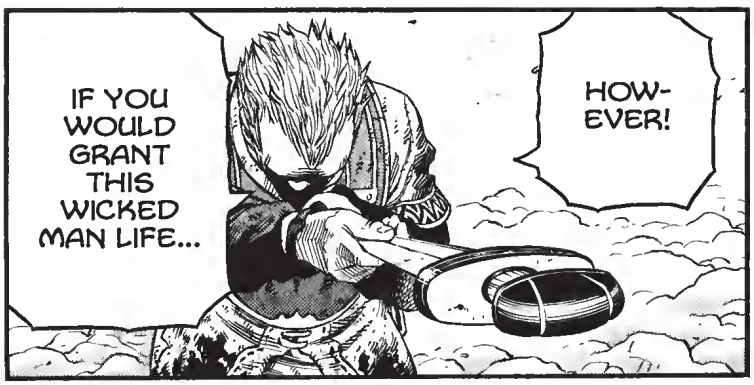

HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
...?

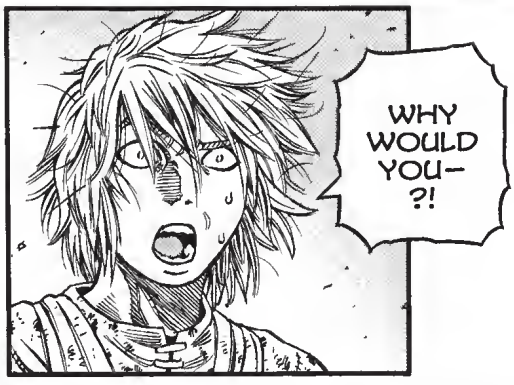

TSK
OH, HE'S STILL HERE?
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA

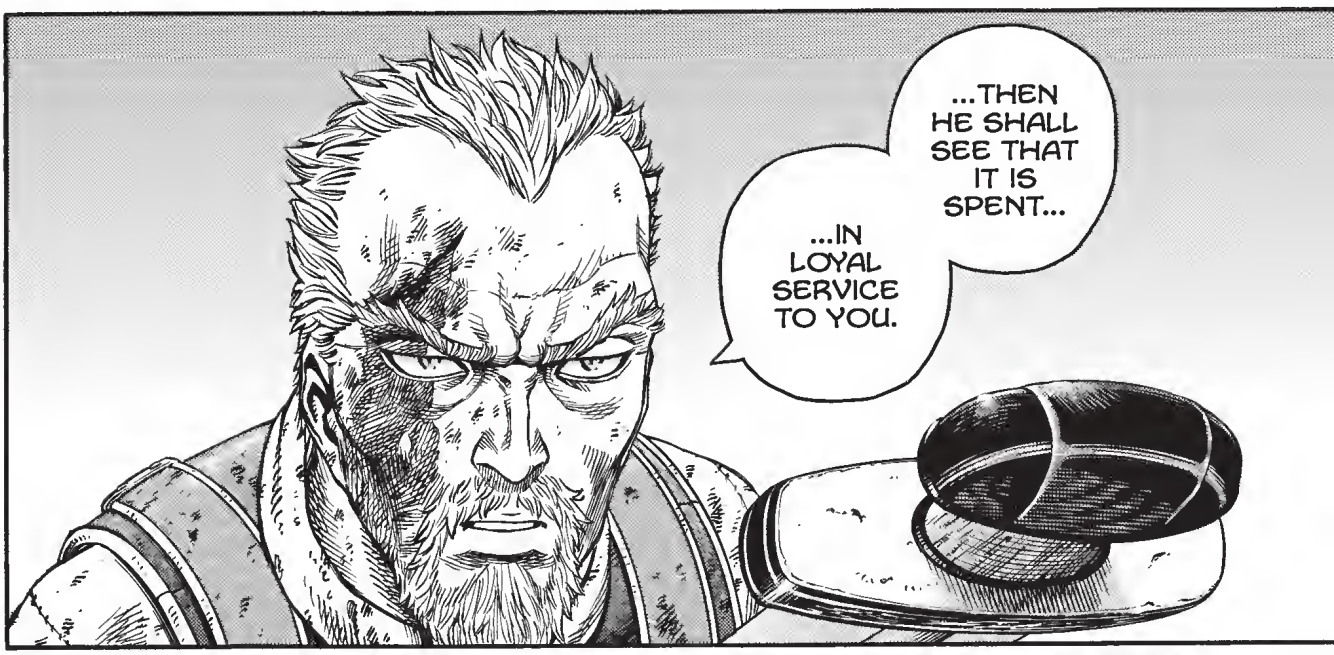

AHHHH....

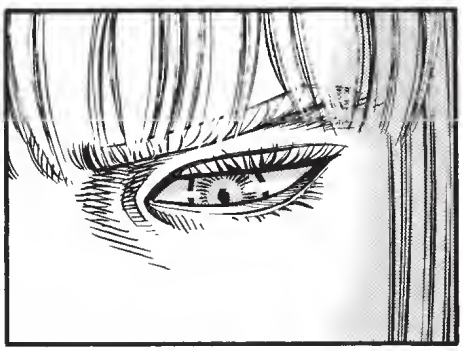


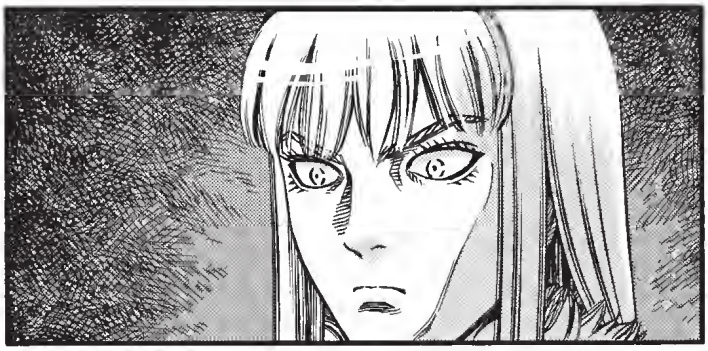
ZUSH
PRINCE CANUTE.
SHH...
FF...
IT WAS I WHO KILLED LORD RAGNAR.
STRIKE ME DOWN.


IF YOU WOULD GRANT THIS WICKED MAN LIFE...
HOW-EVER!

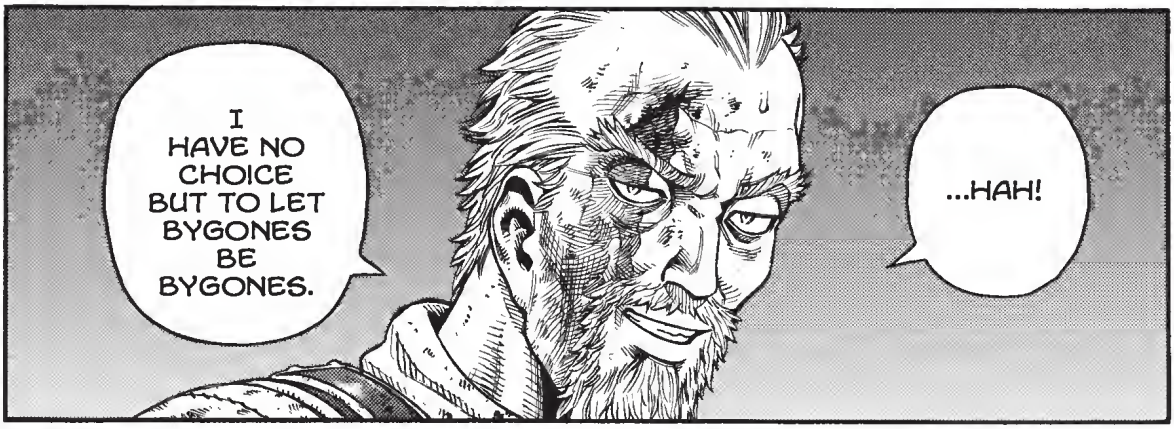

WHY WOULD YOU-?!


...IN LOYAL SERVICE TO YOU.
...THEN HE SHALL SEE THAT IT IS SPENT...





DO RAGNAR'S SHARE OF THE LIFTING.
THAT IS YOUR ATONE-MENT.
ZSH...
AS YOU COM-MAND!
MA-JESTY!
I WAS IN HIS SERVICE FIRST.
COPY YOU?
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA? DON'T COPY ME!
WHEW
I ALREADY KILLED ALL YOUR MEN, THOUGH. HOPE YOU DON'T MIND.
EITHER WAY, WE'RE PARTNERS NOW.
BYGONES, AND SUCH.



CHAPTER 42 - END

VINLAND SAGA MAP

THORFINN'S TRAVELS

BANKS OF THE RIVER SEVERN

Askeladd's band attempts an escape after their hiding place was spotted, but Thorkell catches up to them in his pursuit of Canute and Thorfinn.

THORKELL

ASKELADD

THORFINN

CANUTE

THORS

JOMSBORG

The port town the Jomsvikings call home. Thors was once a member of this band of Vikings, known far and wide as the fiercest warriors of the day.

North Sea

Northumbria

Irish Sea

York

Askeladd's Planned March

Danish Occupation

Gainsborough

Lindsey

Derby

Nottingham

Stamford

Leicester

East Anglia

Mercia

Welsh Kingdoms

Brychaeiniog

Morgannwg

Q. Severn

Bristol Channel

Bristol

Bath

England

London

Wessex

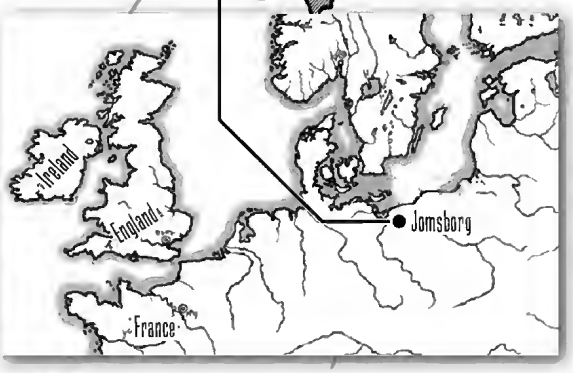
Winchester

Cornwall

Lyme Bay

English Channel

Strait of Dover

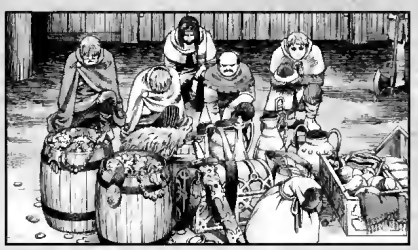


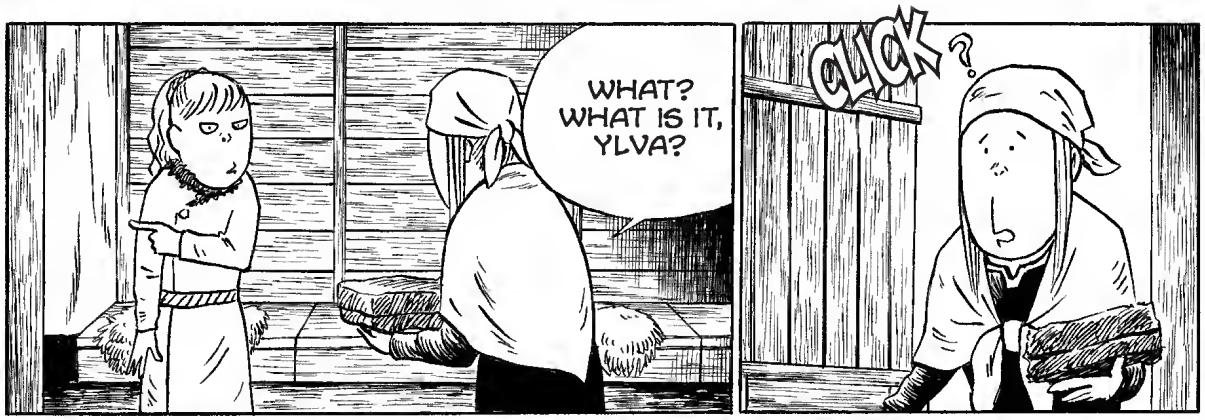
GAINSBOROUGH

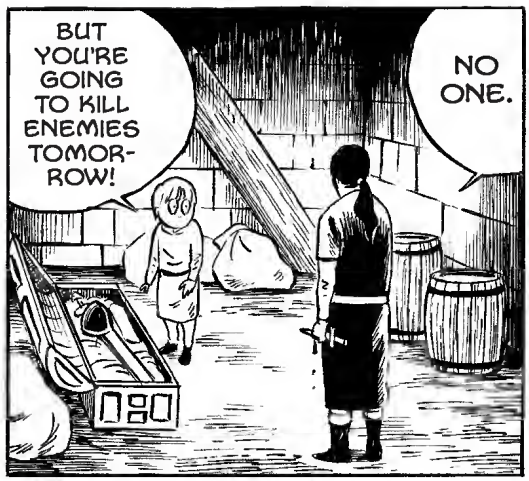
The home base of the invading force of King Sweyn, Canute's father.

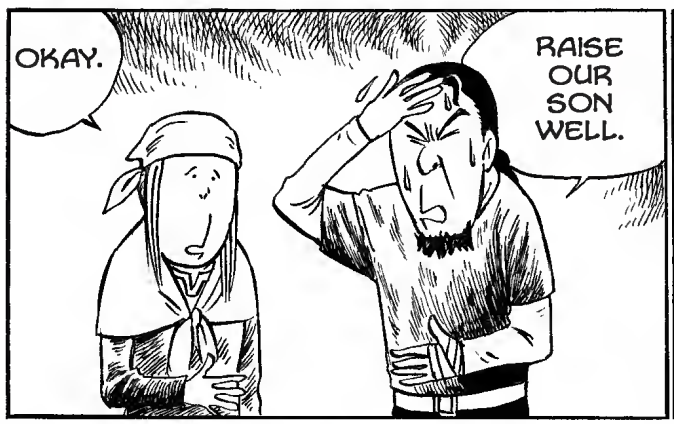
KING SWEYN

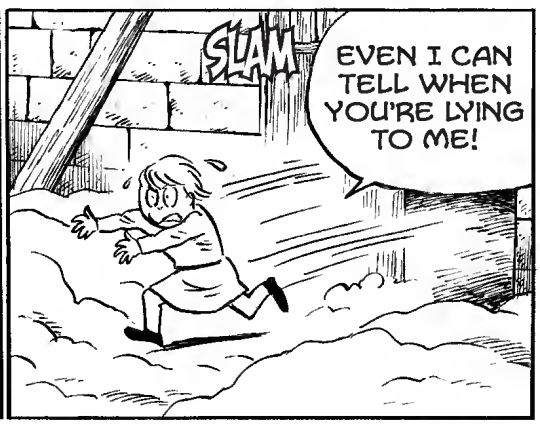
FLOKI



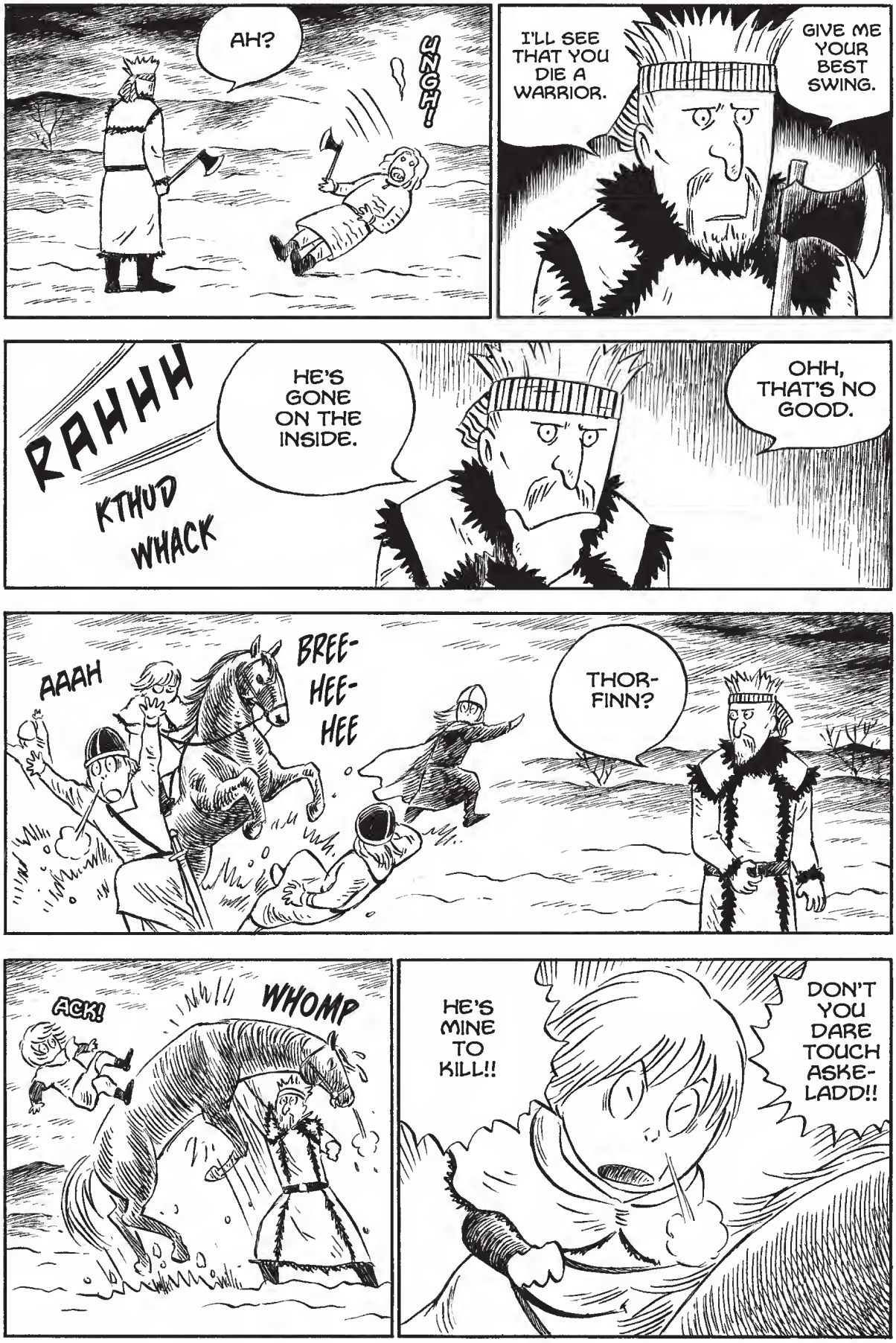






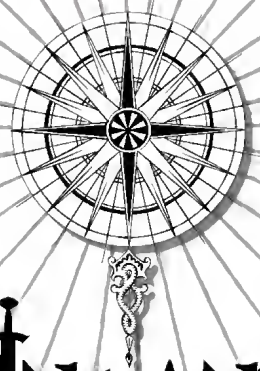


MANGA: HAITO KUMAGAI
HAITO KUMAGAI PROFILE BY MAKOTO YUKIMURA: ONE OF THE TALENTED ASSISTANTS WHO HELPS CREATE THIS MANGA. HE'S INCREDIBLY VERSATILE. UM... ARE WE GOING TO YELLED AT FOR COPYING MIZUKI-SAN'S STYLE?


AH?
UNGH!
I'LL SEE THAT YOU DIE A WARRIOR.
GIVE ME YOUR BEST SWING.
RAHHH
KTHUD
WHACK
HE'S GONE ON THE INSIDE.
OHH, THAT'S NO GOOD.
AAAH
BREE-HEE-HEE
THOR-FINN?
ACK!
WHOMP
HE'S MINE TO KILL!!
DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH ASKE-LADD!!

My second son was born in 2008. The eldest is already two years old. Pretty soon he'll be able to read manga. So... what should I do? Frankly, this manga does not contain material that is suitable for children, what with the wanton murder and all. But despite that, I'd be happy if he read it. I want him to read it before he grows up. Even the smartest of children must learn something from those who came before, something they would never have discovered on their own. I will do my damnedest to draw what I've learned in this manga. Will you read it? It's actually rather entertaining. Should I slip in more jokes? What do you think, my sons?

MAKOTO YUKIMURA



VINLAND SAGA

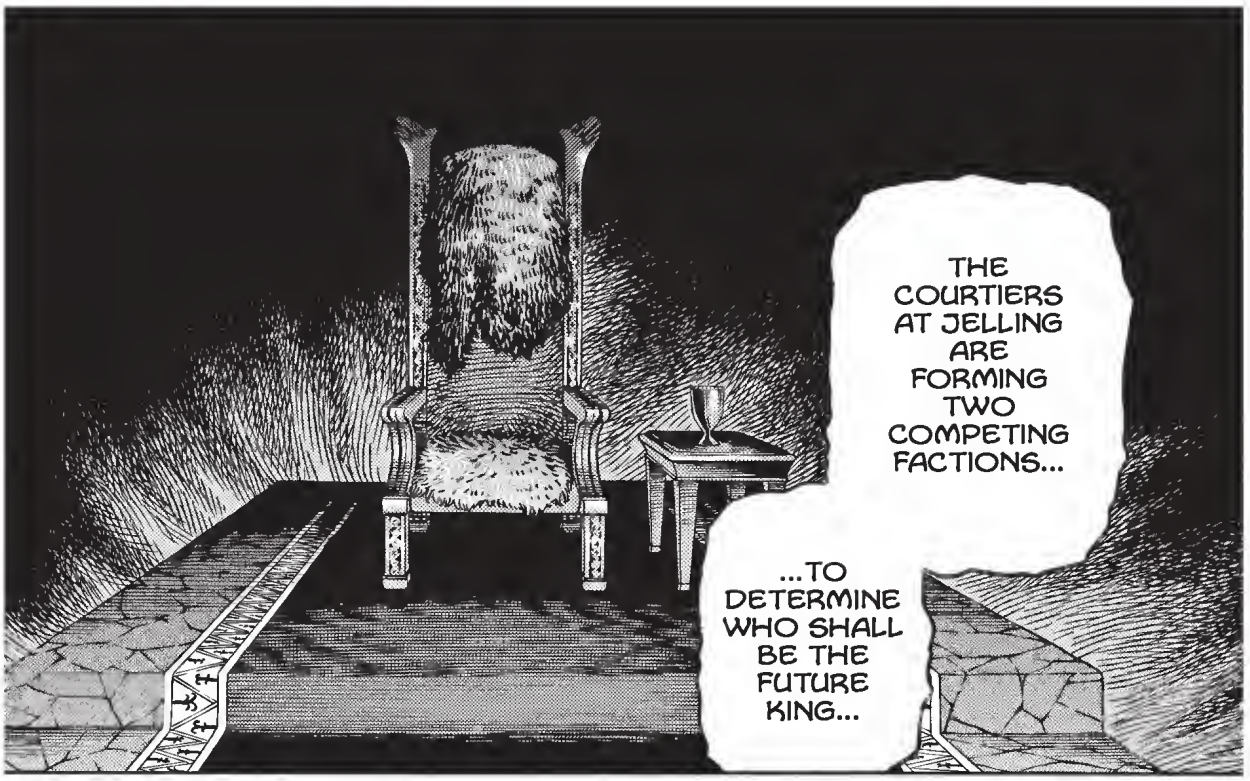
Translation Notes

Witenagemot, page 14

A meeting of noblemen held in Anglo-Saxon culture meant to advise the king on various matters. In some ways a Witenagemot was similar to Parliament or the Althing of Iceland, but unlike the latter it was only called in service of the monarchy. In some cases, Witenagemots were summoned to assist in managing the kingdom during interregnum.

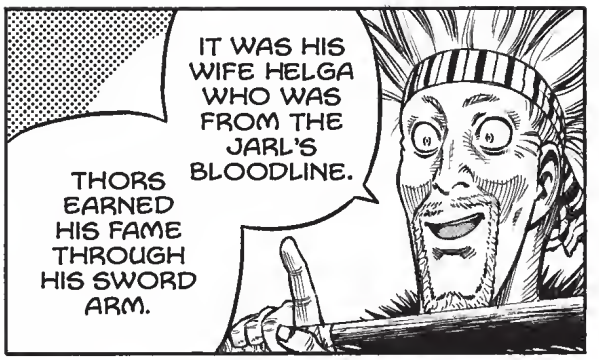
Jelling, page 68

A village in Denmark that was once a significant seat for the Danish monarchy. It is most renowned today for the "Jelling stones," monuments erected in the 10th century by King Harald to mark his conquest of Denmark and Norway and the Christianization of his realm.



Jarl, page 217

A nobleman of medieval Scandinavia. The word jarl is the basis for the English "earl," and by most accounts, jarls were lords of their own regions, answering only to the king himself.



Battle of Hjörungavágr, page 319

A naval battle estimated to have taken place around 986 A.D. between the Jomsvikings, acting on the behalf of King Harald of Denmark, and Haakon Sigurdsson of Norway. Until that point, Norway had been a vassal kingdom of Denmark, but Harald's conversion to Christianity and subsequent attempts to instate it throughout Scandinavia rankled the Norsemen. When Denmark struggled with the Holy Roman Empire to the south, Norway took the opportunity to renounce its allegiance to Harald. In retaliation, he sent the Jomsvikings to invade Norway, but they were defeated by Haakon at Hjörungavágr, off the coast of Norway.

Hnefatafl, page 355

A popular Viking Age board game played in Scandinavia. The suffix -tafl means "board." This board was attached to a variety of games originating in the region. Hnefatafl was a particularly popular game in which one side plays the forces of the

king, who must move from the center of the board to the corners to escape. The other side plays the siege forces, who must capture the king. Although no concrete rules remain on record, hnefatafl is mentioned in several Viking sagas.

Freya, page 360

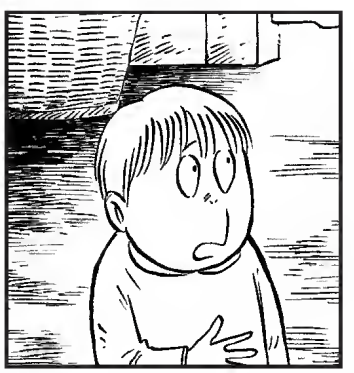
The Norse goddess of fertility, love, beauty and war. Freya rules over Fólkvangr, a field in the afterlife that is the destination of those deceased who do not reach Valhalla.

Battle of Maldon, page 369

A battle between England and the invading Viking force in 991 A.D. Earl Byrhtnoth led a small force of Anglo-Saxons against the invaders and was routed. This defeat for the English led to the practice of Danegeld, a tribute paid in appeasement to the Danish invaders.

Shigeru Mizuki, page 434

A manga artist, creator of the beloved *Gegege no Kitarô* series detailing a variety of yôkai, traditional Japanese monsters and spirits. Mizuki's artistic style is distinguished by its distinctive long faces and profile-view mouths, as well as his ability to combine the ghoulish with the cartoonish.



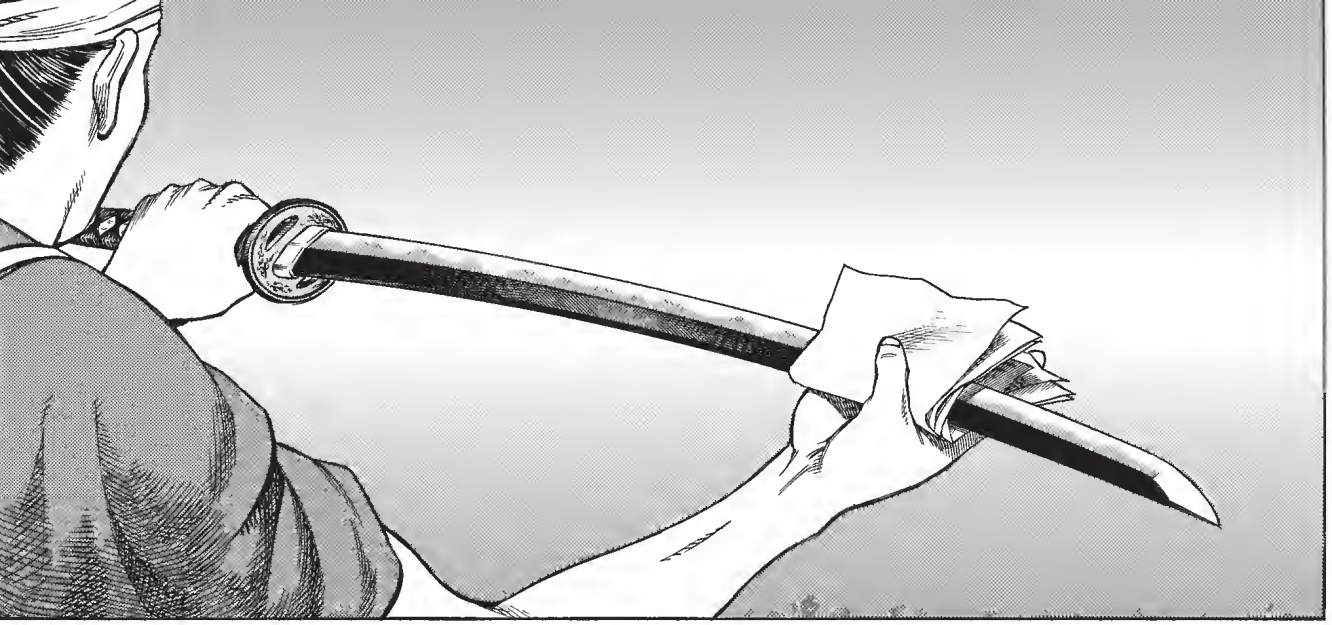
For Our Farewell Is Near Part 3
By Makoto Yukimura

Introduction

At the end of the Edo Period, the arrival of the "black ships" from abroad spelled the end of 260 years of isolation enforced by the shogunate. In response to the shogunate's desire to open the country's borders, disgruntled regional forces loyal to the emperor, such as the Choshu Domain, planned a rebellion. The imperial loyalists massed in Kyoto, where the emperor lived, growing increasingly bold until the city became, in effect, a lawless area. In an effort to restore order, the shogunate recruited ronin (masterless samurai) in Edo (Tokyo) and sent them to Kyoto.

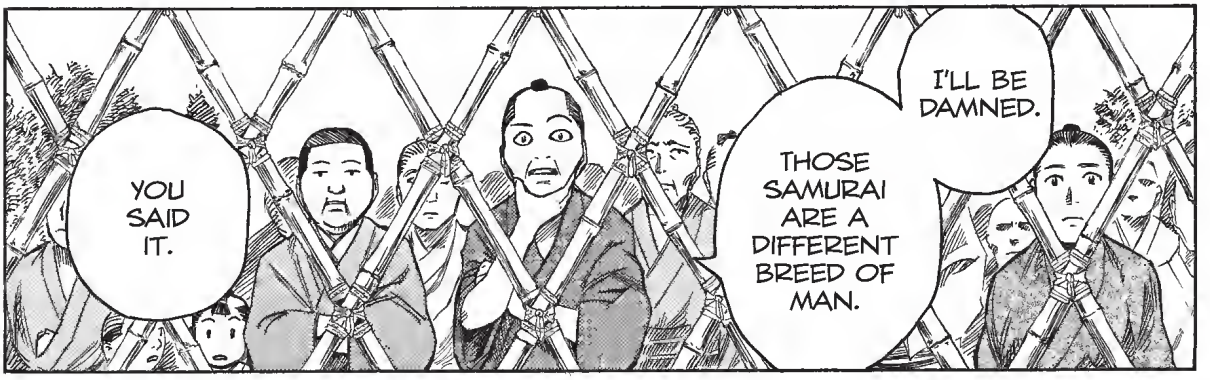
Among these men were Kondo Isami and Okita Soji, students at the Shieikan dojo in Tama. Upon reaching Kyoto, they formed the "Shinsengumi" under the orders of the daimyo of Aizu Domain, who had been charged with keeping the peace in the city. But, unable to reverse the tide of history, the shogunate lost power, and the Shinsengumi were defeated at the Battle of Toba-Fushimi. In 1868, Kondo and Okita had fled to Edo. Okita's body was already wracked with tuberculosis at this time.

To read Part 1 and 2 of the story, see *Vinland Saga* Book One and Book Two.

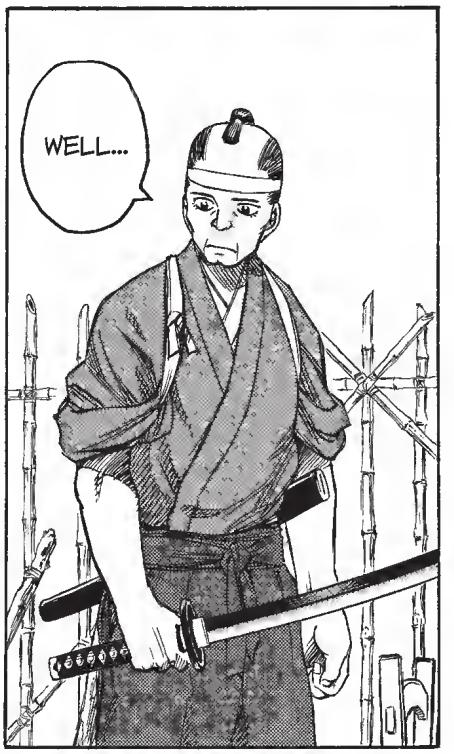


SO THAT'S KONDO?
KONDO THE DEMON, OF THE SHINSEN-GUMI.
HE CERTAINLY LOOKS LIKE A KILLER.
BUT ONCE A KILLER'S REDUCED TO THIS, HE'S NOTHING.
HE LOST IN KAI, AND WAS FOUND HIDING IN NAGAREYAMA.
NAGARE-YAMA?
PREPARING FOR THE NEXT BATTLE, THEY SAY.
NO REST FOR THE WICKED, APPARENTLY.
WHAT'S TO BE DONE WITH HIM?
A PUBLIC BEHEADING.

JUST LOOK AT HIS FACE.
SCHEDULED TO BE BEHEADED, YET HE STARES ON AS THOUGH IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH HIM.


YOU SAID IT.
THOSE SAMURAI ARE A DIFFERENT BREED OF MAN.
I'LL BE DAMNED.

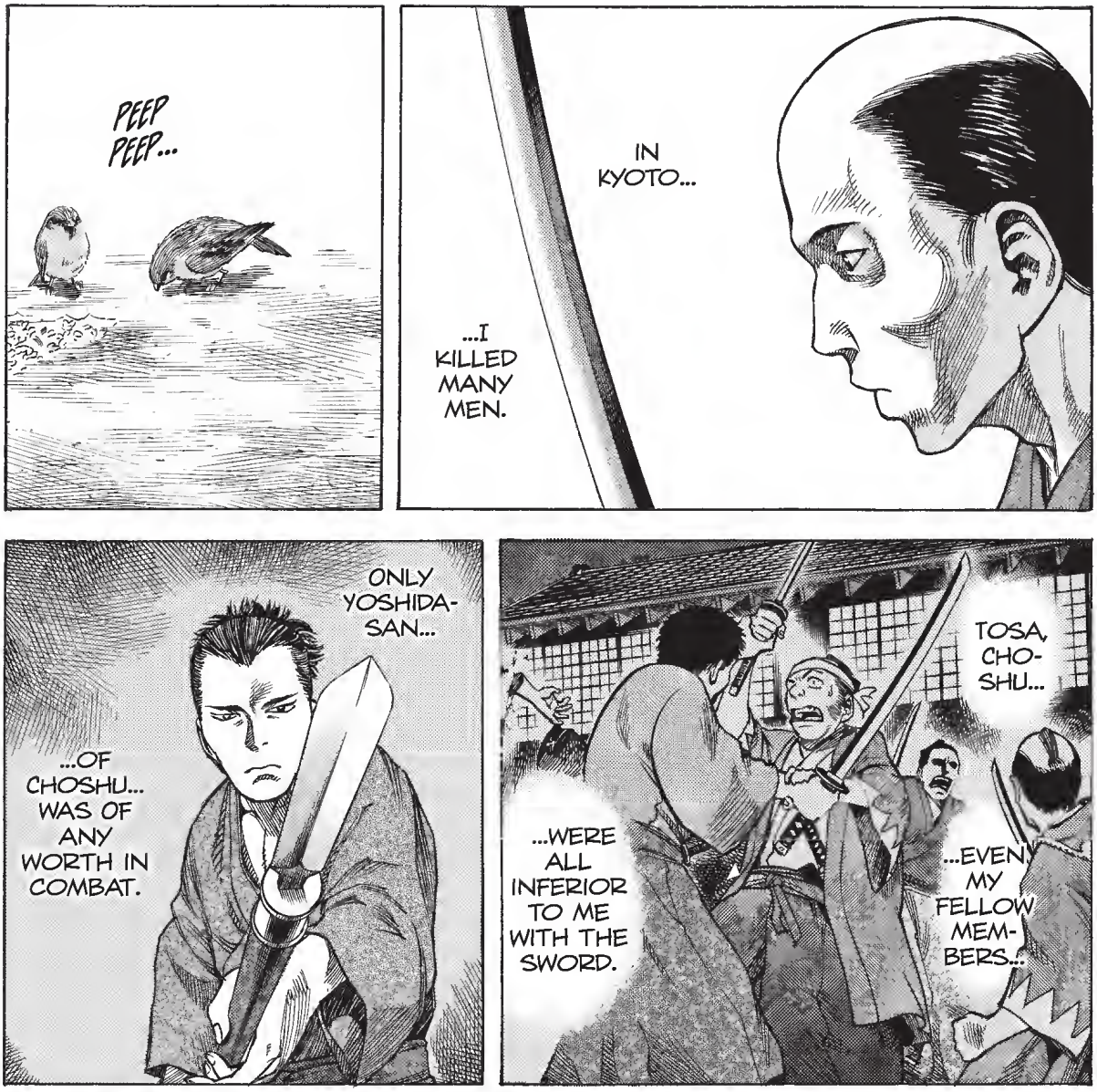
BAH.
WHY DO YOU WASTE YOUR TIME ASKING?
... KONDO-DONO ?
ARE YOU READY ...


WELL...

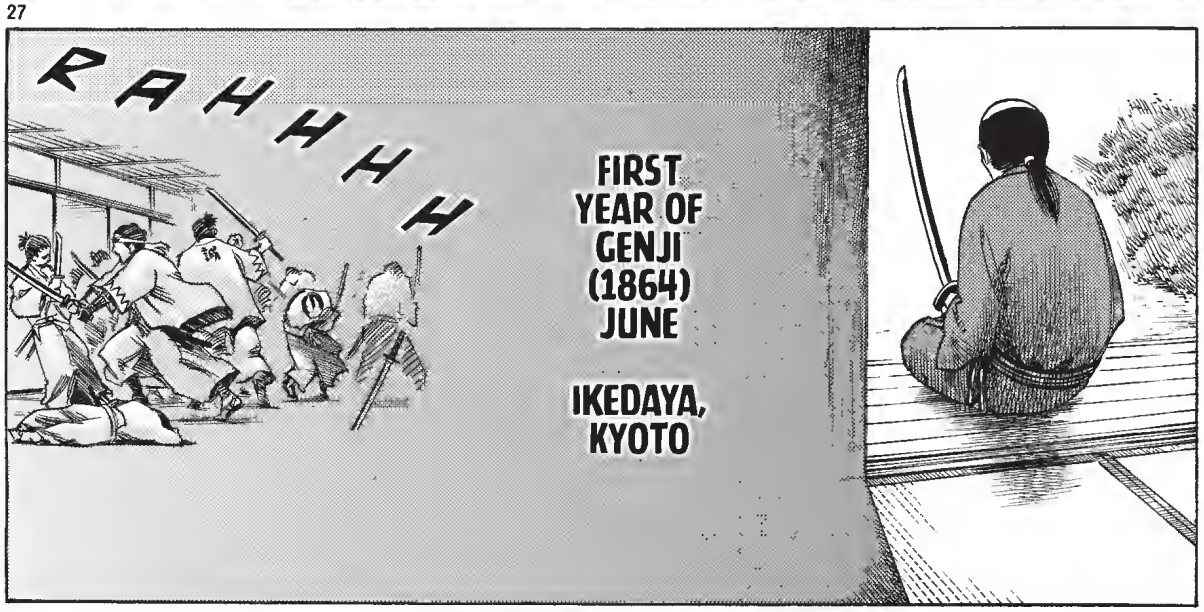
MY LEGS ARE FALLING ASLEEP.
JUST GET IT OVER WITH.
A MAN LIKE YOU AT LEAST DESERVES A PROPER HARAKIRI.
IT IS A TERRIBLE SHAME.
A SAMURAI OF YOUR CALIBER, PUT TO THE SWORD...
KILL ME AND BE DONE WITH IT.
AND NOW I'M PITIED BY A BEHEADER?
HAH!

BUT I ONLY KNOW OF THE SWORD.
IF I CANNOT LIVE OR DIE BY THE SWORD ANY LONGER, THIS LIFE HOLDS NO INTEREST TO ME.
THE AGE OF GUNS IS COMING.
I LEARNED THAT MUCH FROM THE RECENT BATTLE.
I PUT EVERYTHING TO THE SWORD.
I CUT, I CUT, AND CUT TO MY HEART'S CONTENT.
TIMES WERE GOOD BACK IN KYOTO.
.....
THOSE WERE HEADY DAYS...

CHIRP...
PIP
PIP...

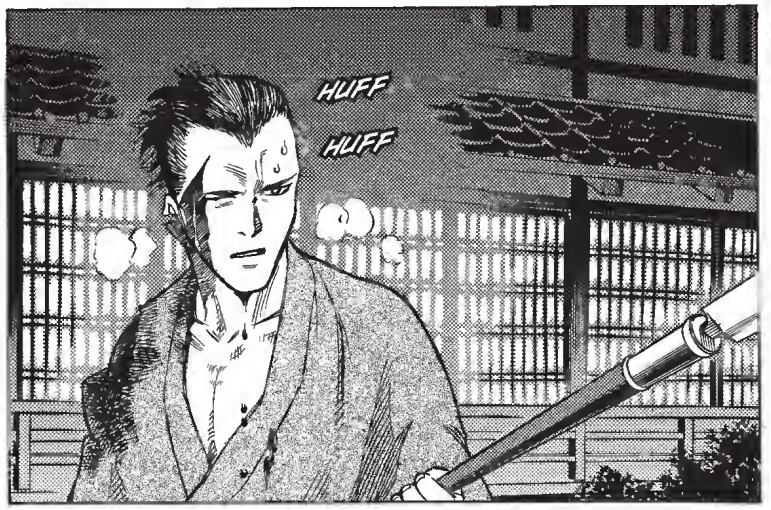

PEEP PEEP...
IN KYOTO...
...I KILLED MANY MEN.
ONLY YOSHIDA-SAN...
...OF CHOSHU... WAS OF ANY WORTH IN COMBAT.
TOSA, CHO-SHU...
...WERE ALL INFERIOR TO ME WITH THE SWORD.
...EVEN MY FELLOW MEM-BERS...

27


RAHHH
FIRST YEAR OF GENJI (1864) JUNE
IKEDAYA, KYOTO

DMM
E!!!
!!
GSH
DSH
RAAHHHH
WE ARE THE SHIN-SENGUMI, UNDER THE ORDERS OF MATSU-DAIRA OF AIZU!
HAVE SOME PRIDE! RESIST, AND WE WILL SLAY YOU!!

STAMP
STOMP
STOMP
RAHH
AIEEE


HUFF
HUFF

DRIP
DRIPP

YOUR SKILL WITH THE BLADE IS IMPRESSIVE.
I WOULD KNOW YOUR NAME.

COFF
COFF

YOSHIDA TOSHIMARO, WARRIOR OF CHOSHU.
OKITA SOJI OF THE SHINSEN-GUMI.
GREET-INGS.
COFF
SCRAPE
30
EIYA!
VAAAA

ASK YUKIMURA

This exclusive Q&A with series creator Makoto Yukimura appears only in the U.S. edition of "Vinland Saga." Future volumes will include them, too, so if you have a question you'd like to ask Mr. Yukimura, please send it to kodanshacomics@randomhouse.com, or to:

Kodansha Comics
451 Park Ave. South, 7th floor
New York, NY 10016.

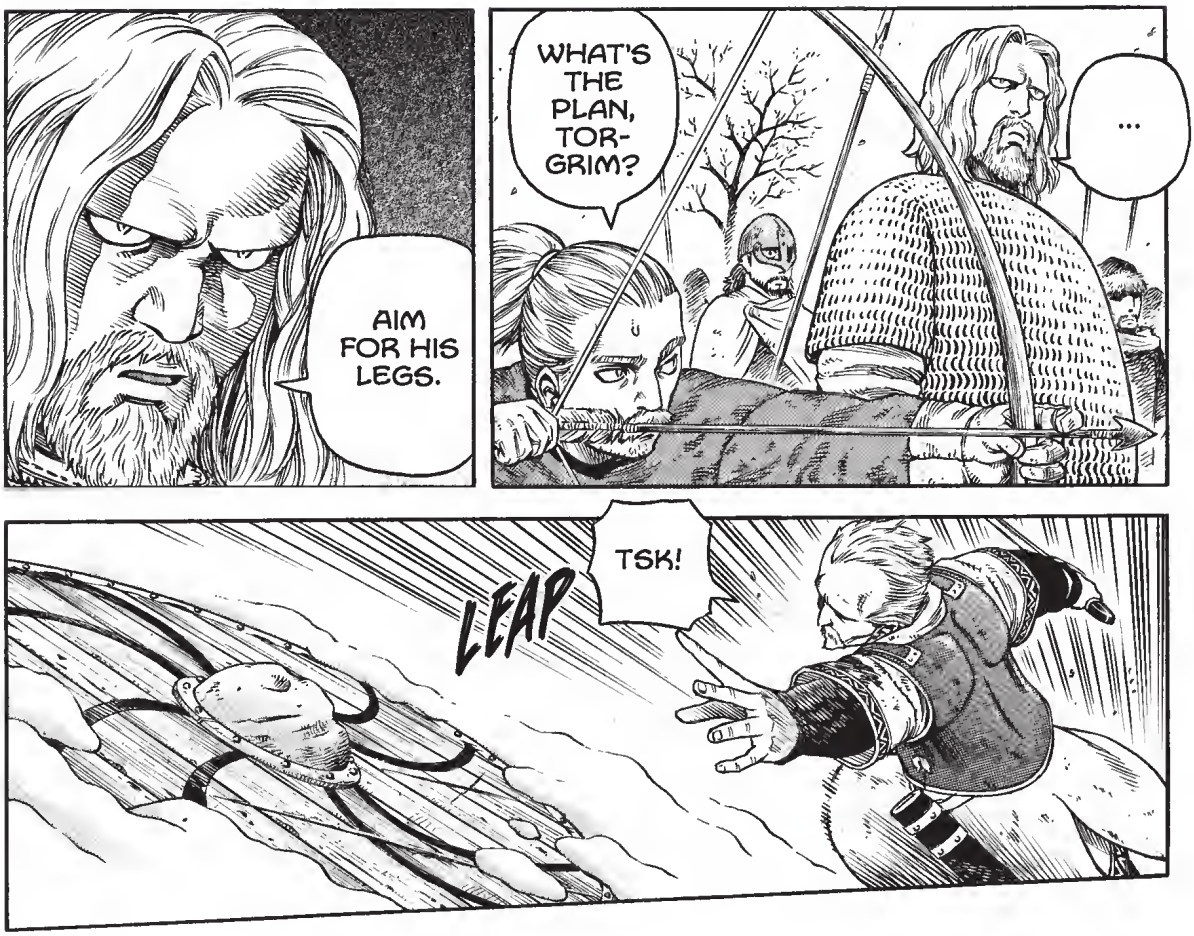
Kodansha Comics: *After your success with* Planetes*, what made you want to leave science fiction and write about Vikings instead?*

Makoto Yukimura: I decided that the Viking Age and its cultures were the most appropriate setting to explore violence, the theme I wanted to write about.

Relative to other manga artists, I don't get really hung up on genre. What's most important to me is how to communicate to the readers what I'm trying to say, what I'm trying to draw, in just the right way, without any misunderstandings. Certainly it's easiest to stay motivated if you just turn the motifs you like into manga, but the motifs I like aren't necessarily the best way to express these themes.

You've obviously done a lot of research into Norse history and mythology. What surprised you most about Viking culture, and do you have a favorite Norse myth or tale?

I forget the source, but the thing that surprised me most was about the Vikings' moral feelings about murder. Around the beginning of my research, I read in some book that, of course, they recognized that murder is a sin. But at a feast with drinking, if you killed the man next to you while under the influence of alcohol, the sin would be absolved because "the alcohol was sitting in the seat." I felt that a society that had feelings like that toward murder yet didn't collapse was very unique.



My favorite tale is Hænsa-Thorir's saga [Hænsa-Þóris saga]. As the name indicates, it's the story of a Viking farmer named Hænsa-Thorir. One day, a local big man named Ketil came to Thorir and suggested he sell some of his hay. But Thorir didn't want to sell. Thorir, who was born into a lower class and had no dependents or ability as a warrior, was despised and threatened by everyone living nearby, so no matter whom he sold to it wouldn't be a good deal for him. But Ketil pressured Thorir, using the social norm that he who has should give to those who have not. Ketil proposed deal after deal, but Thorir refused. Finally, Ketil said, "I have done everything I can to negotiate, but he has obstinately refused." Using that as a justification, he decided to take some of the hay without Thorir's consent. Thorir brought a claim against Ketil for seizing his hay, and the story gets complicated, but in the end Ketil was killed. When I read it, I realized that Vikings weren't mere anarchists. If there was something they wanted, they didn't immediately plunder it. In everyday life, they

had negotiation procedures based on norms and laws. And it's easy for us living today to understand those norms and laws. This was the work that made me realize that the Vikings were people just like me. It made me see that they worried about the same things, fought over the same things, and had the same sense of right and wrong.

Do you have any message or advice for people reading the beginning of Vinland Saga in English for the first time?

There is a message that I believe should be communicated to people if they aren't already aware of it. But I'm not confident that I can explain it in just a few sentences. My hope is that readers will understand this message through my work, by experiencing what my characters experience.

SEE YOU IN BOOK FOUR, COMING JULY 2014!

Vinland Saga volume 3 is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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